

spare Rib

women's magazine June 1973
20p

**YOU AND YOUR DOLLIES
SHEILA ROWBOTHAM**

**WOMAN'S ROLE:
SHORTCUT TO
MADNESS**



**SYLVIA PLATH: UNKNOWN SHORT STORY
WHERE CAN YOU TURN WHEN
CRIMINAL ASSAULT HAPPENS AT HOME?
JILL TWEEDIE TALKS TO VICTIMS OF
MALE BRUTALITY**

**ADULT EDUCATION: DON'T BE
PUT OFF—YOU CAN START
YOUR OWN COURSES**

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Yoko Ono
 'Death of Samantha'

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You've just picked up the twelfth issue of Spare Rib, celebrating our first birthday. All of us in the office, Marion, Marsha, four Roses and sometimes Lucinda and Sally, have had a year working together. By now we've changed and, we're sure, you've changed so it's time the magazine did the same. We are increasing our news coverage and adding regular columns on science, education, health, the law and more; bringing you not only ideas but the practical information you've told us you need. Why is a woman's point of view important? The press has begun to take up some of the issues previously dismissed as hysterical demands of Women's Liberation, and has provided coverage of events like the passage of the Anti Discrimination Bill. However, as long as the newspapers restrict articles for women to a single Women's Page - a page usually devoted to fashion and food - it is even more important for our news to present the women's point of view, analysing the significance of events in relation to women's lives and reporting on our unseen, undiscussed problems.

We are being promised equal opportunity, and equal pay in 1975 but we mustn't be lulled into complacency - real liberation of women's minds and bodies has hardly begun. We are not going to let Women's Liberation be wrapped up in an Anti Discrimination Bill and forgotten like the vote. We want you to continue sending your advice and ideas, and sharing your experiences with us.

****A word from our distributors, if you have had any trouble getting Spare Rib every month either place an order with your newsagent or take out a subscription and receive your copy direct from us.**

BEATEN UP WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN

by Jill Tweedie

The house is a two-up, two-downer next to a mini-cab firm, opposite a bus station, one of many scheduled for demolition. The downstairs window has thick boards nailed against its lower half and on the door a notice says Women's Centre. The door lets women in, the boards keep men out. Nobody who steps across that threshold and out into the street again can avoid feeling just a little less fond of the male sex and just a little more aware that there is something rotten in the state of women.

At the moment, the house protects some twenty women and their children from violent assault by their nearest and dearest, those men who once promised to love and cherish them. It cannot, of course, cope with any red-tape adequately, but it does seem that where there's a will, backed up by blind terror, there's a way. The small front room is awash with battered toys and battered kids, a baby asleep on the carpet, a teenager watching television, a toddler toddling. In the upstairs front, warmed by a sputtering gas fire, beds are jammed alongside each other, in the upstairs back there are chairs and a desk and a cot containing a baby. Downstairs, outside in the tiny yard, more kids play and everyone shares the outside, spotless, loo. In the kitchen women stand and cook and talk.

Cupboard prison

May is a small pretty pregnant blonde, here with her smaller daughter. Last year she used to live with a man who said he'd look after her and her child. He looked after her and after her and after her, escorting her on every errand, coming back during his lunch hour to accuse her of fucking innumerable men, men who had come up through the floorboards, men who had squeezed down the chimney, men who then forced their unwelcome attentions upon him as well. Laugh? She could have died. Mad? Not a bit of it, the doctor round the corner said so. Later, the man began to kick May a lot at the base of her spine and she worried that her baby would

be damaged. Later still, he locked May and her daughter in the bedroom without their clothes, all day and all night for months on end. No-one came to enquire why the child was not attending school. Well, says May, we didn't have a doorbell from our attic so how would they know we were there? One day, when the man was washing his hands at the sink, May got a sudden unaccustomed jolt of adrenalin. She grabbed her kid and her coat and ran. You'd be surprised how fast she found she could run.

After wandering the London streets for a while, she went to the Town Hall. They were just closing but someone gave her the Women's Centre address. She's been here three weeks now and has stopped shivering. She only worries now that the baby she is carrying might be mad, too.

Pat, now, she's got everything going for her and says so, often. Nice baby, nice husband, gives her £16 a week housekeeping. She's a nice-looking girl, too, except she's got one blind eye, given to her by her husband on the Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays when he's not quite so nice.

'Oh, I know when it's going to happen. He'll be drinking away quite happily, two, three, down the hatch and then, suddenly, it's as if a shutter comes down right over his eyes'.

When the shutter comes down the husband who's good to her Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Sundays starts hitting her and kicking her until she is unconscious on the floor, sometimes with a broken leg, sometimes a broken rib. She never goes to the police because she doesn't think they can do anything for her and she doesn't want the neighbours to know. Well, of course, they do know, don't they, my God they ought to, the noise. Not, says Pat quickly, that she makes any sound, that'd only make things worse, but neighbours don't want to get involved. So she comes here for a day or two, when she gets the chance to escape. This time, she's waiting to see if he'll stick to the anti-booze pills he says he's taking. He adores that baby, she says, looking at the carri-cot beside her. Wouldn't lay a finger on him. Yet.

Nearly murdered

Dell has only been married three months and already she's collected a bullet in the neck from her old man. The police came up to see her in hospital but she said it was accidental. Well, if she'd told the truth he'd have murdered her good and proper. He's said, over and over, he'll get her if it's the last thing he does and she believes him. He's a devil, she says. He doesn't care what he does. But Dell is one of the lucky ones, she's only had months of it and no kids to tie her to him.

Life of beatings

What about the anonymous wrinkled forty-year-olds who look all of sixty, who've been whipped every day of their lives, whipped from birth by the hands of their fathers right into the whipping hands of their husbands, their days spent staring out of windows, waiting, hearts banging, for the familiar male figure and the familiar pain. An Irishwoman, tiny and skeletal, nods towards her small sullen son marked with the strap on his back and legs. His sisters have it worse, though. Father has a Yale lock on his bedroom door and he takes one daughter in with him every night. They



photographs by Angela Phillips



do not report what happens to them there, Dad tells them not to or else. The mother comes round to the Centre to spill out her horrors and scuttle home again, terrified the husband will refuse her entry and keep the girls if he finds her out. The other women shrug their shoulders and nod their heads. *'If they can't get it off their wives, they'll get it off their daughters and that's a fact'*. One woman here was tied to the bed by her husband who then, ceremoniously, broke her big toe with a claw hammer. Really, I can hardly go on. There's something so lurid, so sensational, so News of the World about these stories, don't you find? Can such things happen so often without the women ... well ... deserving it?

Key to safety

When Erin Pizzey went to her local council and asked them if they could provide a condemned house as a community centre for women, eighteen months back, she did not envisage all this penny dreadful stuff. The original idea, growing out of her own women's liberation group experience, was an attempt to carry the consciousness-raising of the group into a wider arena, into the community and out of the isolation of each women's four walls.

An attempt to break down what Erin believes is the greatest division between women, the economic barriers that make them feel, entering another woman's house, oh she's well-off, she won't understand my problems. Women, she reasoned, should have some central place down the way where they could go at any time and know there would be other women there to talk to, to share experiences, on neutral and common ground.

'We need these houses everywhere across the country: small houses, doesn't matter what condition, where each woman has a key and there are no leaders and no led. There are hundreds of places women can go for advice and advice is all they get. But what many women need is a refuge, a place other than their own homes, other than their families' homes, where they can come whenever they want or need to get away'.

Women came all right, before the paint was dry. A stone was lifted and out from under crawled the pale evils of female oppression, the hidden evils of society's attitudes to women in marriage. If her husband is good to her she needs no-one's help but, like the slave-owners of old, if he is not good to her, that is his affair.

Violence is, most of all, his affair, whether directed at this wife or children. Lip-service is, of course, paid to the belief that he ought to love and cherish her rather than belt the daylights out of her, but it is only lip-service. The police will not interfere and who can blame them - the wife so often refuses to press charges because where will she live while the charges come to court? At home, with the man she is charging for assault? A man might jostle them in the street and, upon complaint, the police would step smartly in. But a husband may beat them to a bloody pulp and no-one wants to know. So over all the tut-tuttings of friends and the tea-and-sympathy of social workers hangs their constant, paralysing fear - this time he will kill them, this time the children will be taken into care, at all times they have no money and no place to go.

Violent secrets let out

The Women's Centre provides that place. Broken down, crowded, beds on the floor, it is nevertheless a kind of palace to its women inhabitants. Inside, safe with their children, huddled together, they learn astonishing things. That other husbands do this to other wives and children. That a

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YOU AND YOUR DOLLIES.

by Sheila Rowbotham

The early history of the doll is lost in mystery. While it is likely that doll like figures have been used in religious worship, it is uncertain how long dolls have existed as playthings. The Egyptians we know, had dolls around 2,000 B.C.. They were made from a thin piece of wood and had hair made out of strings of wooden or clay beads.

In some primitive societies now, dolls do not exist, in others they are used to teach children about secret religious beliefs.

The modern doll has appeared along with the specialisation and division of labour of industrial society. Only when a society produces enough to maintain its young in a period of play and formal education, can the concept of childhood as a distinct period in life emerge. Although this tendency has been evident in capitalism since the sixteenth and seventeenth century, it has only become general in our century.

We have excluded children from production and created a mass market of leisure goods of which toys and dolls are just one part. Like fairy stories and certain games, dolls, originally involved in the life of the whole community, belong now to the world of the child. For a long time this world had a certain archaic quality. Just as the poor dressed in hand-me-downs and thus preserved aspects of past styles, the child played with toys which reflected a society which had somehow frozen. Although this continues to some extent, the contemporary world has tended to leave its mark more quickly upon the playthings of the child.

The doll as preclusive property of the child also indicates that faith in the image as a symbol of magical and religious power is being discarded by adults in a society.



photographs by Claus Hansmann
from "Dolls the Wide World Over"
Published by Harrap



A very clear example of this close connection between doll images and the break with the ritual and magic in the Christian church comes from the late 16th century. Opponents of Catholicism ransacked Bristol Cathedral and gave the figures of the saints and the virgin Mary to children as dolls. The Protestant internalises the image of God and carries divinity within the individual conscience.

Class

Dolls have their own class distinctions. Until 1800 there were either beautiful craft dolls clad in expensive and elaborate clothing - a doll aristocracy - or the simple clay or wood dolls of the poor, bought and sold at fairs like the labourers hired by farmers.

The mass market for dolls began in the 19th century, with the growth of the middle class - and has only recently spread to the working class child. In the 19th century, too, the middle class dolls house appeared, reflecting the smaller dwellings of the new rich rather than the aristocratic stately homes.

The doll as educator

Educationalists from the eighteenth century have been and are interested in the significance of play in the child's learning, though they have often accepted that children should be brought up to fit into the station or role which already exists in society.

For instance in 1809 a German called Friedrich Campe wrote:

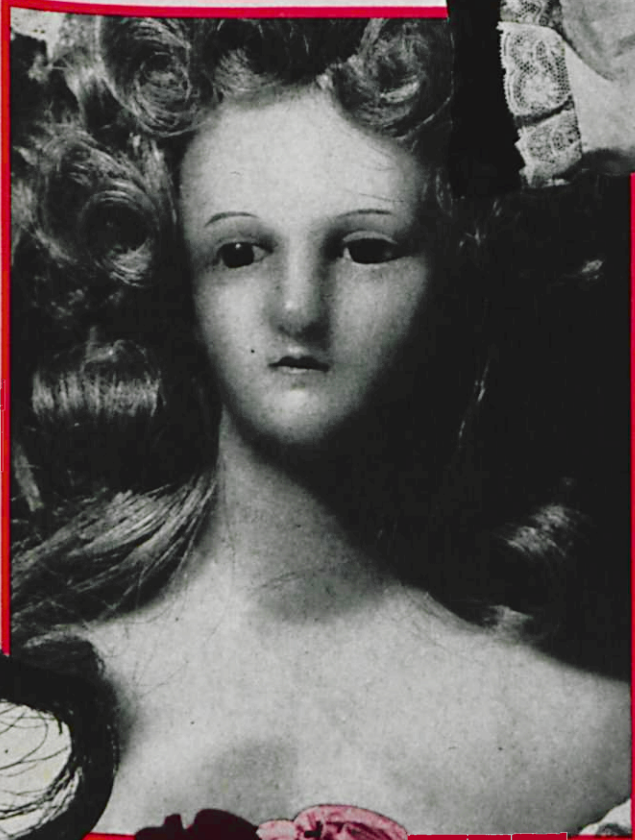
'Rough games do not suit little girls. But a quiet domestic sense, diligence and a wide knowledge of all the work produced in a home, are the foundations upon which their chance of future happiness must be built. And what could better prepare them in this than doll play'.

The present division of work between the sexes means that assumptions that sex roles are somehow fixed and natural persist long after we have discarded the rhetoric, if not the reality, of there being a natural lower order of 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'.

The contradictory values of capitalist society penetrate the protected world of childhood. Children are presumed innocent, yet we teach them to compete and destroy. Ironically, while the little girl is taught to love and care in preparation for domestic passivity, our little boys manipulate miniature armies and simulate the strategies of imperialist warfare against guerillas, urban crowd control and mass atomic annihilation. One New York firm, Aurora-Plastic, even offers children an electric chair in miniature complete with plastic offenders to be exterminated. The child can experience the delight of punishment.

Our macabre world finds its way through the doll images into the mind of the child. The little girl learns her femininity in the glass like mask of her doll, the little boy his masculine power through the small soldiers he organises.

If the toys really did come alive when the grown-ups were fast asleep would they reproduce the big world as it is, or perhaps rebel? Would the painted dolls drop their masks, the soldiers mutiny and G.I. Joe - a soldier doll promoted in America since 1964 - throw away his kit and weapons and join the G.I.'s who marched against the Vietnam war?





Waitress du Jour

Joyce Betries

Why the lady who serves you the cuppa puts up with her job.

1. In the States..

I've been waitressing about four years. There are good things about it. At the end of the day you always have some money in your pocketbook from tips, and you keep moving (I'm a nervous person, and I like to keep moving), you can kid around and joke - I hate to be serious all the time. Besides, one or two uniforms and a couple of pairs of white shoes are a lot cheaper to buy and keep up than a whole work wardrobe that you have to keep in style. Sometimes you can really get along with the people you work with, and when that happens, it's nice. Waitresses and cooks and busboys have to work together, and when we don't, it's hell.

I always try to stay away from the boss as much as possible. Bosses are always threatening us, and trying to find something

wrong with what we do. If we don't have a union, the boss can do whatever he wants. Once when I was desperate for work I applied for a job in a "hip" coffee-house. They told me I had to work 12 hours a day, and I wouldn't get a salary. I would just get to keep my tips. After 10 hours, I walked out. It just wasn't worth it. I had made \$5.00. In another non-union place, I was fired at 4 Sunday morning after working all Saturday night, because I told the boss I couldn't come in that afternoon. There was a union poster in the subways at the time which showed a boss of 70 years ago saying, "If you don't come in Sunday, don't come in Monday," and explained how a union had ended conditions like that. Well, such conditions still exist for many waitresses.

Even with a union, waitresses are vulnerable. A union can get us a paid vacation, maybe a set weekly schedule,

seniority rights, a pension, sick leave, and some medical benefits, and force our boss to have just cause before firing us, but he still might paw us, treat us like we're stupid, and try to take advantage of us anyway he can, hoping we won't know our rights and complain to the union. Unions aren't often easy to deal with either. Almost all the union leadership is male, and how much they want to help varies from person to person. In one union shop where I worked, now and again the boss would reassign the stations, giving a new woman a station that one of us with more seniority should have had. We would phone the union and usually get results, but our representative treated us like children who had gotten hysterical over nothing, and it was degrading. Still, I'm glad we had a union. At least we had that much. I've helped organize for a union in a non-union shop.

We make most of our salary in tips. No union I know of has seriously tried to get us a decent wage. Many people think that all waitresses make a lot of money. Well, sometimes you do find a job where the tips are very good, but that's rare. Usually, in these jobs, the bosses are especially obnoxious because they know you make good money, and don't want to lose the job. Then it becomes a matter of your human dignity - if the extra money is worth the degradation. Waitresses often make less in so-called "fancy" places, where the food is expensive. In many places like this, the kitchens are so inefficiently designed that it's impossible to give fast, efficient service, especially when there are three to five courses to serve, so the customers don't think you deserve a tip. I have never known a boss to consult the cooks and waitresses as to how the kitchen should be arranged, although we're the ones who obviously know best, because we work there. In restaurants where the tips are really good (where they automatically add 15% service charge to the bill, for example), they generally employ waiters. Also, with the inflation, people aren't tipping very much. With most people, when the cost of living goes up, their salary remains the same, and even then it's hard. With us, when the cost of living rises, our salary actually goes down.

Last summer I went to New York State Employment Agency for a job. They told me there were no jobs because waitressing was a luxury job, and when money got tight, it was one of the first to go. Sometimes it's a luxury for people to eat out, but it isn't a luxury for the waitresses!

We really work for our money. We run miles every day. Many of us eventually develop varicose veins, box feet, and uneven shoulders from carrying heavy trays on one arm. I worked in Schrafft's chain for a while. We had to carry round trays balanced on one arm, piled with food. It was just too heavy. I wore an elastic wrist support, but even that didn't help. The worst thing was we had to hold the tray on our arm while we cleaned the table, piling it with dirty dishes. We weren't allowed to rest the tray on the table because it "didn't look nice." Along with the dishes and silver, we had to clear off enormous water goblets that were very heavy when there was water remaining in them. Then, when the tray was piled up we had to remove the dirty table cloth with our free hand (pick up the salt, pepper, ashtray and sugar) and often, because it was very busy, tuck the dirty cloth under our arm, and spread a clean cloth, balancing the tray all the time! Sometimes there would be people sitting at the table waiting to be served while we did this. This was a union shop. On top of that, Schrafft's had two sections to the restaurant - a men's lounge for businessmen, where women weren't allowed, and a section for men and women. In the men's lounge, the servings of ice cream and soup were larger for the same price. We were told that it was because "men eat more."

Often we are lucky if we get a chance to sit down and take a break, and even then nobody covers our tables for us. That means that I'm in the middle of eating dinner, and

a customer sits in my station. I have to get up and wait on him. Sometimes the work is so heavy and so nerve-racking and I'm so busy that I can't take a break, and have to leave a sandwich near my station and take bites as I run by. The boss will push me to handle as many customers as I can - more than is humanly possible, because then he doesn't have to hire as many women. The boss hardly pays us anything; we make most of our salary from tips. It would cost him next to nothing to have another waitress on the floor. When I work like this I go home exhausted and dream about it. The dream is a typical real busy day - we're running out of food, and there are no plates or glasses or silver clean, and orders are packed up in the kitchen, and I'm running around and the customers are demanding the food, and the boss is following me, asking why people aren't served, and the cook is screaming at me because he doesn't have the food to fill the orders, and I have to go back, after people have been waiting a while and see if they want to order something else. I wake up feeling more tired than when I went to bed. The dream was driving me crazy, and I told it to a woman who had been waitressing most of her life. She said, "Oh that, everybody has that dream." Since then, I've had other women mention it to me, the waitress dream.

Some kitchens are really dirty. I used to work breakfast at a coffee shop in the richest section of New York. I was there at 7 a.m. The first thing I had to do was walk in the kitchen to get the silverware, and the smell used to make me sick. The employees had to eat downstairs, where it was filthy. There was no ventilation and we had to fight the flies for our food. I worked in a bar-restaurant where they let me work in sandals. I stopped wearing them because I found out that rats lived under the counter where I picked up the food. I was afraid my toes would get bitten. These were both considered "high-class" places too.

Many waitresses work six days a week, and if we're lucky enough to work only five

days, we usually have to work at least one day out of the weekend, and we're lucky if we get both our days off in a row. Most waitresses have to work holidays (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Mother's Day) because that's when people come out to eat. We never get a chance to spend a holiday with our own families.

One thing you can't mind too much if you're waitressing is dirty language. Sooner or later, when it gets real busy, the cook is going to curse you out for something that isn't your fault. I don't like it, and often the cook and I sit around and joke about it later over a cup of coffee when the restaurant is closed and the tension is off, but the joke becomes stale fast. The cook knows I need his cooperation in order to give good service, to make tips, and almost all cooks, because they're men, think they're better than waitresses. When this side of them comes out, there's just no way one woman can set them straight. Most trouble starts between people who work together when somebody thinks they're better than somebody else.

Bosses like to keep some employees thinking they're better than others when it doesn't effect the efficiency of their restaurant. They work hard at keeping the women employees divided, especially hostesses and waitresses. Hostesses have a nicer looking job than waitresses. They're on their feet all day, but they wear street clothes and usually don't have to do the heavy work of carrying loads of food, the way we do. Sometimes bosses don't like to be bothered directly supervising the waitresses, so they make the hostesses do it instead. In the last place I worked, we waitresses weren't allowed to eat anything without paying for it. None of us had ever before had a job where we weren't allowed to eat, and we knew how unfair this was. The hostess had to enforce this rule, and if she caught us eating, she would yell at us, and sometimes she told the boss. If the boss caught us, not only our job, but the hostess's job would be in danger. The hostesses were also made to enforce the boss's rules on how clean our uniforms and shoes should be, what was the proper length for our skirts, how we should wear our hair and make-up, and how long and how often we should take breaks. Often she was made to check out the bathroom to see if we were "hiding" there, smoking. Since the boss had more personal contact with the hostesses than with us, he would try to take her into his confidence - complaining about the waitresses, telling the hostess how much much better, and even prettier, she was than we were. There is no doubt in my mind that hostessing isn't an easy job, but often hostesses order us around as though they were the boss, when we all know that they are being used by the boss, just as we are. They always make less money than we do, but still they forget what side they're on.

Waitresses are always called "girls" no matter what our ages. Yet, in a lot of places, the bosses try to pit the older and the younger waitresses against each other. In one restaurant I worked a counter in front of a large picture window. The tips were good and the boss was nice to me. Most of the ▶



photographs by Edward Bell

older women worked the back of the restaurant. I never bothered much about it, but after a while, some of the older waitresses started calling me "Miss America." I didn't know why. Slowly I found out, by piecing things together, and with the help of one of the cooks, that the boss had hired me specifically because I was young, so that I could work in front of the window and "attract customers." My first reaction was shame, then anger. I had been used as bait for three months.

Almost all customers think they're better than we are. Some can't remember what I look like. Others expect me to smile and ask them how they're feeling, or they won't tip. Some actually tell me to smile. Sometimes, when they catch me in the wrong way, I ask them, "Is that an order?" But I've gotten into trouble with the boss for that. A lot of people think that if you're a waitress you're automatically stupid, and they treat us like children. I was waiting on three middle-aged men in business suits. One was wearing a button on his lapel that I hadn't seen before and I asked him what it meant. All three of them started laughing and joking about the waitress who wanted to know what the button meant. It was as if I didn't exist. A lot of out-of-town businessmen are like that. If I really tell them what I think of them, I'm in danger of losing my job.

Most customers are completely blind to what a waitress is doing, or how busy she is. I find this especially true of people who have a lot of money. I worked a busy counter in a fancy coffee shop on Madison Avenue in New York. I was always on the run. Every day we ran out of silver in the middle of the lunch rush, and I would have to wash my own and didn't have any time. The neighborhood was high class and while I was doing all this and trying to wait on more people, customers would call me over and ask me for another cup of coffee, because their cup had a small crack, or a chip! They just couldn't see me. They were completely blind to my racing back and forth right in front of them.

I've found that of all the people who treat me decently, most are other working people. I've checked it out. Clerks, sales people, gas station attendants - they're usually the people who say "thank you" or have a joke, or tell me not to hurry when it's busy. I guess they know what it's like to work for a living and take orders. The nicest customers I had at the job were two men from the Department of Sanitation who took a break in the middle of the morning to have some pancakes. They treated me like a human being.



photographs by Marsha Rowe

.. 2.Up the M.I.

Mrs Forbes, cleaner on the night shift from 11 pm to 7 am.

"I work for 8 hours during the night and then in the day I work at home. I've got four children, 2 of them have left home, but I still have to look after the little ones. I've been here 8 years now, before that I worked in a factory in Rugby, I got better pay there, but I had to take a night job for the kids. My husband does shift work for the British Railway, so it suits him that I work nights. He came over first from Jamaica, that was 13 years ago. I've never had any difficulty finding work, but the situation is getting worse. I get depressed in this job - the winters are cold, the kids get lice, you know you want to live your life to a certain standard, and when you can't make it, well, you know, it gets you down . . . I don't think it is my fault, but I don't know anyway to change it."



Rita, works behind the till on the 3 pm to 11 pm shift.

"I left school when I was 15 and worked in a shoe factory. So far I've been in the cafe for 14 years. I prefer working nights, it gives me time to do my work in the morning - I live with my parents and help look after them. My father works, but my mother never has, she stays at home all day, watching TV and knitting. No, I've never wanted to get married, I always wanted to earn my living. I'm now 35, and I don't expect to ever get married."



Mrs Moore, cook on the 3 pm to 11 pm shift. Aged 44

"I work 5 days and then have two days off, then I work for 8 days, with two more days off. It suits me alright, this arrangement, it means that I have time in the morning to see to the children, and as my husband works nights too, he drives the bus that takes us to and from the cafe, it suits him okay too. We don't have a union, but if anything goes wrong we have bosses we can take our complaints to. Every shift has a supervisor who we can complain to, she takes it to the boss, and then fixes an interivete for us. Even if the trouble is about the supervisor, we can still complain."

You get very tired in this job - it's hot and you're on your feet all the time. But you can't blame the firm for the long day, if you've got kids then this is how you have to do it. We requested a fan about two weeks ago, it hasn't come yet, but probably will. I did start on the night shift (from 11 pm to 7 am) but that really knocked me up, I was only getting three hours sleep. Sure, I could have taken a part time job, but the trouble is, you have to pay your fares to and from work, at least here you get free transport."

THE CHANCES ARE..

Unlike us poor workers on Spare Rib, some of you readers should be battling away at the Equal Pay game. Last issue it looked like a toss-up between employers and some unions to defeat women's demands. Now Geoffrey Sheridan gives some clues on how to use the unions to win.

Although women are now joining unions at twice the rate of men, few become involved in union affairs, even to the extent of occasionally attending meetings. There are first-rate women shop stewards and convenors, and an increasing number of women militants, but in terms of numbers they are a tiny minority.

Many women feel that unions are essentially the concern of men, and this attitude is reinforced if they regard their income as merely an adjunct to that of their husband. Yet for the vast majority of women who do a job outside their work in the home, the contribution of their income is essential for the financial support of the family, and most women workers - both manual and white collar - have now come to realise that they are a permanent part of the labour force (unemployment allowing), with as much right as men to a fair rate for the job.

While it is true that most male trade unionists are not especially active, it is the activists who mainly shape union policies. This is not to suggest that union executives and paid officials are necessarily directly responsible to the rank-and-file (whatever they may have to say on the subject), but it is principally by the decisions and actions taken at local and branch level that national policy and the behaviour of the officials will be determined.

For women workers, particularly those with family commitments, there are immediate and practical problems. It is difficult for them to attend meetings which are held in the evenings or on the weekend. If these cannot be shifted to the lunch-hour, the provision of creche facilities will

mean that young children can be taken care of, and indicate that women will not be making an unwarranted invasion. Such facilities have been set up by several union branches, including a telephonists' branch of the Union of Post Office Workers, in North-West London, where twice as many women members now attend the quarterly meetings.

The next hurdle is for women to gain the confidence to stand up and put across their point of view. In an environment likely to be dominated by men (quite possibly in the backroom of a pub), it can take more than a couple of pints for a woman to confront the amazement of her brothers that she has a considered opinion on any subject relevant to the work situation.

IS IT RIGHT TO CONTINUE THIS POLICY OF APARTHEID?

The Tyneside Campaign for Equal Rights, recently founded by the women's sub-committee of Newcastle trades council, is proposing to organise classes to train speakers. A solution adopted by some unions, such as the Technical and Supervisory Section of the Engineering Union, is to set up women's sub-committees at branch, regional and national level, enabling women to freely discuss their problems without being made to feel that they are raising minority or marginal issues. It is essential that the issues and proposals can then be effectively

raised, discussed, and acted upon at the main meetings, otherwise the women will find that they have simply been hived off.

The idea of separate representation for women, both within and between unions, has been opposed by some women trade unionists on the basis that it is to claim a privilege inconsistent with demands for equality, and that it discourages women from being elected as delegates to such events as the annual Trades Union Congress. 'Is it right to continue this policy of apartheid?' asked a clerical worker at the 1973 TUC women's conference, but a motion to wind up the annual conference was defeated by a substantial majority. Many delegates considered that it does at least provide a forum for women to exchange their views, and merely removing it would not guarantee that more women would be elected to Congress.

Some unions, such as the Association of Cinematograph, Television and Allied Technicians, and the National Union of Journalists, have elected or appointed special committees to examine and report on the situation of their women members. But although these committees may well come about as a result of rank-and-file pressure, their contact with the mass of the membership has generally been tenuous.

THERE IS MORE AT ISSUE THAN UNDILUTED MALE CHAUVINISM

Continued on page 13

BEATEN UP WOMEN & THEIR CHILDREN.

blind eye and a cracked rib need be no secret shame, to be veiled behind net curtains, softened by euphemisms, denied to the outside world. That they are not guilty of some profound and nameless crime, tried by an invisible jury and found deserving of punishment. For good reason, there is one cardinal rule here. No-one keeps secret their particular ordeal. No-one asks Erin or others of the group to step aside so that they may talk in private. Everyone says it out loud the way it is, whether what they have to reveal is about their boyfriend in a Bermondsey tenement or their years-wedded, infinitely respectable husband who is a top barrister with contacts among all the establishment of the land. That's another thing you learn here. Though poverty breeds its own peculiar dilemmas, violence from husbands to wives knows no class barrier - thumping goes on in bed-sits and in stately homes, without prejudice. The shared confessions are vital, too, for any hope of change. We are saying these things, breaking our long-held marital loyalties, because, lady, we're not just here for you and me and May, Pat, Dell. We're here for all of us and for our children's futures.

Kids too

The children of these women learn the same glorious facts. Sammy has not got a scarred back, given him by his Dad, because Sammy is uniquely unloveable, revolting to his own father and therefore sub-human. There's David here and he's O.K. and Fred is nice and Sandra's nice and they are belted, too, by their Daddies.

Once the nasty in the woodshed is out, like hard dry beans in water the children expand. From a closed silence, from anger and fear, they swell into ordinary children playing in an ordinary backyard. No social worker, no kind policeman, no nice man from the Cruelty could give any such assurance. They get it from other kids, in the relief of unfamiliar laughter. What, your old man split your lip? That's nothing. See what my old man did to me. And giggles erupt, numbness melts, that's the way things are.

The women in this house will not go out after they arrive, sometimes for a long time. They are often uneasy with the most benign of male visitors. They fear men, with reason. They live together, twenty or so women in a house built for a couple and one baby, they clean, they cook, they pool their monies and there are no quarrels, no aggression. Occasionally, someone's husband, someone's persecutor comes drunkenly banging on the door so, after six o'clock, the door is not opened. And these women, as Erin has noticed over the eighteen months, never hit their own children. Violence is a male problem and here, though some of the briefly-housed women have been psychotics or dossers used to a very rough life, all goes smoothly.

Wives shared fate

Such women are, often, those whom the liberation movement would ordinarily never touch at all. They are not initially interested in whether women should join the trade unions, or get equal pay, or be Maoists, or have orgasms. They learn the burden of being female the hard way, their consciousness is raised whether they will or

no, on the long plod from one office to another, places where they were given to understand they had a right to expect help and help has not been forthcoming. The family unit is blessed by the church and consecrated by society, a sacred and untouchable thing. The man, as head of that unit, can do no wrong to his wife and children unless, of course, he makes the mistake of murdering her. They learn, too, the hardest lesson of all; that a woman must be able to live without a man if living with a man means being treated in a way no human being deserves and that, even without a man, a woman is a person.

In this house there is, oddly enough, no necessity for great solutions other than the change in social attitudes that would render solutions obsolete. The women get together and often leave together, to share flats, to share children. No-one telephones welfare offices for the women, they must do that for themselves, they must cope. They get company and solidarity and shelter and, if they need it, medical and legal aid. Betty Knightley takes on what legal sortings-out there are to do and she has, amazingly enough in the web of emotions and attitudes, never yet lost a case on a woman's behalf. In this house, behind this battered door, up these creaking stairs, grow the grassroots of women's liberation. It is through these women whose experiences lie at one end of a long tradition of injustice, that the position of all women within marriage and society becomes crystal clear. Top-side, well husbanded, the wine is sweet and mellow. But it is cheap wine, with flaws in its very molecules, and it does not travel well ■

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CHANCES ARE..

Articles in the union journal provide one channel for fact-gathering and feed back, but these seldom succeed in stirring up discussion or action in the factories or offices.

The mass media commonly promotes the idea that most trade unionists are 'apathetic' - especially when a vote has been taken to indulge in what the leader writers consider to be an unnecessary or unpopular strike. But the problem of minority participation is not necessarily determined by a lack of enthusiasm or concern on the part of the majority. Trade union consciousness is traditionally located in those sectors with a history of struggle, often experienced in day-to-day dealings with management, and erupting at intervals in a complete or partial withdrawal of labour. In a dispute situation, where whole sectors of the working class may be brought into overt conflict with employers and possibly the Government, wide-scale consciousness raising is an inevitable by-product. And strikes are no longer unique to the areas of traditional militancy. The present economic crisis and the Government's attempt to impose a wage freeze has led to the rapid mobilisation of many previously passive sectors, such as teachers and hospital ancillary workers - jobs predominantly done by women.

Does it follow that in a period of upturn in the class struggle it becomes easier to raise the question of women's inequality at work: of low pay, unequal pay, and limited training and job opportunities?

One barrier is male chauvinism, the conscious or unconscious assumption that women are inferior to men - an attitude which is built into the structure of society on many levels, and which the education system and the mass media play no small part in reinforcing. In terms of female representation within the union hierarchies, there is no difficulty whatsoever in demonstrating that women have barely reached the stage of even token representation. The unions themselves argue that the best candidates, irrespective of sex, are chosen as delegates, executives, and officials, and if women are not coming forward then they have only themselves to blame - which comes back to the question of female participation and the ability to participate.

But when women's interests are routinely ignored or sold out in negotiation, there is more at

issue than individual male chauvinism. There is also the problem of trade union bureaucracy. The girls at Biba, the Kensington fashion store, discovered that they had to threaten to go on strike before their area organiser troubled to press the boss to sign a recognition and procedural agreement. Negotiations had dragged on for nine months, and nothing happened until the girls put on pressure.

Trade union officials often enough take the path of least resistance in reaching a bargain with management, and if their women members happen to be the least vociferous or threatening, then equal pay and opportunity become the easiest part of a claim to drop. This goes a long way towards explaining why few initiatives to inform and mobilise women workers have come from the union 'leadership'.

ONE OF THE FIRST SERIOUS MOVES HAS BEEN INITIATED BY THE TYNESIDE EQUAL RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

If it were only up to women to fight for their rights, however, it could be argued that they will never achieve them in any situation where they are in a numerical minority, since they could always be out-voted by the men. What is crucial here is that women's rights must be advanced as more than a matter of simple justice. It is *only* in the interests of capital to have a pool of cheap labour.

One of the first serious moves to bring the message and practicalities of equality to the rank-and-file has been initiated by the Tyneside Equal Rights Campaign, and its programme incorporates a number of progressive features which will hopefully be taken up elsewhere. The campaign aims to train and send speakers to local union branches; to set up an advice centre to advise and assist women workers - especially on such matters as how to deal with

loopholes in the Equal Pay Act, and the dangers inherent in job evaluation schemes; to establish a 'flying squad' to reinforcements to women in dispute; and to advise unions on how to recruit and involve more women.

Affiliation to the campaign, and participation in it is not restricted to trade unionists. The local Labour and Communist party organisations, as well as women's liberation and Trotskyists groups, have been invited to join in, and since women's equality encompasses broader horizons than equality at work, others will be brought on to particular working parties. The teachers' unions, for example, all deplore discrimination in education, yet have done little to examine or confront the forms that it takes. The Tynesiders hope to look into this, with the help of parents' associations and students.

The deficiencies of the Equal Pay Act, and the ability of employers to circumvent its intentions - in weakly or bureaucratically organised plants - has demonstrated that reliance on the law as a substitute for struggle is a recipe for defeat. But can the law assist struggle, by providing a legislative framework on which to build equality?

In a class society the law never neglects the interests of the ruling class, even if in certain periods some concessions to other interests are necessary in order to delimit the areas of open conflict. The equal pay legislation has brought with it a train of job evaluation schemes by which the workforce is graded - according to the value placed on their function by capital - into what may well become competing groups anxious to maintain and advance their own grade standing. Anti-discrimination legislation, when it comes, will not be wholly unwelcome to employers

either. As the Financial Times reported a couple of years ago:

'Thousands of trained girls who come out of the universities every year are desperately anxious to escape from the triple trap of teaching, nursing, or shorthand-typing... Many of these girls are clearly of high ability, and they constitute a pool from which skilled middle management could be drawn. They would be as hard working and as conscientious as only a grateful outsider could be, and it is conceivable that, in spite of the equal pay legislation, they might not cost as much as male equivalents, at least in the first instance. We will use such women in increasing numbers, when we realise that they exist and feel able to recognise their qualities. Until then, a good deal of talent that is costing a lot of money to train in our universities will continue to be wasted, and British industry will have failed to see a source of renewed energy and vitality that is before its very eyes!'

While self-activity on the Tyneside model seeks to deal with the exploitation of women at the roots and by the women themselves, organising in a very practical way, the Equal Pay Act and the draft anti-discrimination legislation could well simply cream off those relatively privileged women who have found some individual and private way around women's structural oppression.

That is to say, those women who have managed to surmount such problems as child-raising and the home-orientation which makes for inarticulacy. The vast majority of women will be left with absolutely nothing. Marx, in 'Capital', says: 'The more a ruling class is able to assimilate the most prominent men of the dominated classes the more stable and dangerous is its rule'. No doubt the same argument applies to women. The answer is to organise at the roots ■

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Did you know that if 13 people go to their local authority asking for evening classes in anything from Women's Liberation to yoga, the council is obliged to provide courses, a teacher and a site? Carol Dix explains how YOU can change the image of adult education.

Adult Education. Carol Dix

Forty per cent of all adults have not benefitted from their school education. So, did you hear about the Russell Report? Probably not. Another of those government-committee based reports that spent 4 years on an intensive search and discovery mission only to come out with a clarion call to Mrs Thatcher with all the force of a whisper.

But it was on an important subject — adult education. Before it was published, at the end of March, its word was being eagerly awaited as the last chapter, perhaps, in the liberal rewriting of our education policy that supposedly has been going on since the 60's. Even Bruce Kemble, the education correspondent of the Express (noted for his errors of taste but not usually of judgement) fell hard when he foretold: "Russell will be seen in the line of Crowthers, Robbins, Newson, and Plowden as one of the great reforming names in education thinking in the 60's". Instead, the report, costing £1.90 merely suggested that the adult education budget be doubled by 1980, (from 1 per cent of the education budget now); and, that although it is doing a good job at the moment, it should be encouraged to do so more comprehensively.

Back to the beginning. Why is adult education worth noticing, the title is hardly interesting for a start. But as one person put it the other day, "it's the only area of education going in the right direction today." Adult education — being those courses and classes offered by the local education authorities, universities' and polys' extra-mural departments, and WEAs — is the one area of education that is not exam-oriented, has no artificial goals, pre-conceived visions of standards; and can be flexible over hours and where the class meets. Its subjects can range from cooking to communism and can be changed after one course if a failure, or be brought back for another run on popular demand. It's not surprising that many tired educationalists actually look up at the prospect of these ideas. Primary education now has something of the flexibility — but look where those kids have to go on to.

The contradiction behind that picture of adult education is that very few people even know that it exists — and if they do they tend to avoid it as reactionary, dull, and stuffy. All of which can be true, but doesn't have to be. Mike Newman, who is lecturer in charge of special courses at the Addison Institute (an adult education centre covering the Hammersmith and Shepherds Bush areas of London) explains his work:

"To set up a course, all I need is 13 people who are interested. Or even, if I feel 13 people would be interested I still set it up and hope they come. I try to gauge the instincts of the times and the area. My brief is to set up short courses, usually lasting one term (the autumn). In other centres, they appoint someone to be community liaison lecturer, but the great thing about AE is that you can't help but be linked to the community. No-one is obliged to attend. Then, because there are no exams, and I don't have to find a trained teacher, I look around and find someone totally involved in the subject. If it's a course on stocks and shares I don't bring in an economics lecturer, but a stockbroker, for example. And for a course on China, I found a local guy who had lived in China. As long as he can communicate the ideas that's all. The classes can then be much more relaxed, informal and stimulating. There is no need for a defined syllabus, just a broad outline, and the discussions can follow the course of the class — depending on what they want to know.

"Take last session. I set up a course on Living in Hammersmith, relating to crises of urban planning, conservation, history, traffic etc. We had another on the Roaring Twenties; one on Flashpoints of the 20th century (I didn't need to set up a balanced and academic course of political history, just the interesting parts). Then we had one called "Black Experience", talking about what it is like to be black and living in Britain; and one on Alternative Societies with Andrew Fisher leading discussions about magazines such as Oz, IT and Friendz and groups like Release, Gay Lib, Womens Lib and radical lawyers.

"That's a good example of the flexibility, the course on Alternative Societies. That was so popular last year that I set it up again this year. A complete failure. Last year the discussions were totally overcrowded, but this year it was down to a handful. Times change and peoples' interests change. But we don't spend three years setting up an already dead course. They're mostly one-off experiments. With the course on Civil Liberties, for example, that started as a formal course in the first term. They asked for the course to be extended and this is where a precedent can be established. In the second term, they acted as a detached research team, wanted no speakers, but worked on



Oh, is this "Paper-Making in Tasmania?" I thought it was "Drainage in Durban." DW.



their own questionnaire for the people in Hammersmith, seeing how many knew about the available forms of legal aid. This is where AE can support and help finance real community movements.

"The courses I fix up though are about 25 one term courses, out of 250 year long ones at Addison. If you look at the B's in the index you will see that my Black Experience course is accompanied by Beauty Culture, Brass Bands and Bread and Patisserie. All tastes."

Although people "can" run their own education, at the moment, it's a one way movement with people like Mike Newman pioneering (he's by no means the only one) the action. He demonstrated how easy it is for courses to serve community needs: there had been a lot of local concern over the Mind Campaign and they formed a Hammersmith Association for Mental Health. He

offered them the facilities of the Institute to set up a course on mental stress. If people are already a community organisation, he gives them a free hand in setting up the course, just advises them on organisation. Similarly, he says, the local Womens' Lib group were very active and he offered them the facilities. He has fixed up anyway, for Spare Rib to run a course called Women and Men, next Autumn, to which they hope to get both (men and women) along.

If his ideas are right should they be backed up by other AE centres? They should but they probably won't. The trouble is they are run on the whole by education departments who don't care. Many centres don't even have a full-time principal. In London, the 30 under the ILEA budget are positively dynamic (there is little direct control over them) compared to the rest of the country. I did a little checking up on a random sample of names from telephone directories. I thought if I rang up and said I had just moved to the area and did they have any course on any angle of Womens' Liberation or Civil Liberties they should offer me some opportunity to help get such a course going — in its absence:

Kingston — "Womens' Lib? Not any of that, no not in this area, dear."

Surbiton — "No, not locally, I don't think. I can't really advise anyone who might be able to help you in this area, I'm afraid."

(obvious inference in voice that Womens' Liberation hasn't got to

'It's the only area of education going in the right

Surbiton, and that if it does come it won't be welcome.)

North Shields — "No, we don't have anything like that at all in Tynemouth. Have you tried Whitley Bay?"

Oxford — "No, sorry dear, we've not."

Leeds — has an Area Adviser for Adult Education, Youth and Community Development, which sounded promising, but no one answered the phone.

Stoke-on-Trent — at last an interested reply. A nice sounding man said, "You can't teach Womens' Lib anyway. But if you could we'd be the most likely to do it. One of my colleagues is laughing at me, I'm sorry, but we do do some things focussing on the idea: women in the modern world, some day schools and lectures. And there is a course in Sexual Politics in Congleton. It's a bad time of year for these though. If you wait till the autumn and see what's in our prospectus." Top marks to Stoke. I felt very attracted to their attitude and would have been encouraged to start going — even if it meant waiting till the autumn.

But then that's the other difficulty: the location. Russell reported that the local education authorities catered for 1½ millions in '68-'69, compared to the ½ million at the universities and WEAs. So most courses offered are in traditional school rooms. That's the main reason for the low cost of AE — there is no need for new buildings. Is that good or bad? Bad if you get into an infants' classroom, with little chairs and feel that small. The teacher/pupil relationship is all too hard to lose. But looked at in another way — in the light of education for the community — it could be good, if it meant it brought adults into the schools. Even Russell points out, though, that to encourage the benefits of learning to adults lost on the way, "they must see it as something relevant to the quality of their lives, and not as the mysterious testing and rejecting process that their own school days seemed to be. Only then can neighbourhood and community schools develop."

It's mostly the middle class that take advantage of AE. In fact up to now, it follows that the poorer the area the poorer the adult

education provided. Russell again points out that we are in a Darwinian situation where the educationally fittest survive, and they are a minority. But then he goes on to suggest that AE should offer more adults a second chance and loses himself in dreaming up plans for more exams to get the lost ones ready to take those other exams. And we thought adult education was trying to lose that emphasis. Mike Newman expressed the fear that the vocational nature of AE may be very vulnerable to being sniped at by the educational authorities. Russell also suggests that courses should be attractive to the unemployed as 'an interesting



We can watch Coronation St. or 91 + do Tatting at the A.E. DW.

outlet'. (They might be better discussing why they got into such a situation, I would say, setting themselves to working out just how governments manage to treat people like figures on a balance sheet).

Adult education should be (and could be) a service to the community. Already, these ideas are being put into practice. Some authorities have started up 'community schools'. Which ideally should mean schools open 363 days a year, to anybody from the community. There is one in Sheffield that a recent visitor, Terry Jackson, organiser of Adult Education from Ealing, says actually has 200 or 300 adults sharing school activities. They come in to do legal work, craftwork, pottery etc. You can see parents working alongside children in an integrated set-up. And in the evenings you may get



2000 adults. Some day school children attend in the evenings too, for courses not offered in the day (such as the history of the working classes), and the school gives them time off in lieu. Adults also share the school swimming pool, gymnasium and canteen. Which all makes such simple sense. Colin and Mog Ball in a recent Penguin "Education for a Change" say, "School buildings themselves are under utilized. That is already widely recognized. Why invest hundreds of thousands of pounds on building a school when the buildings are used for, at the most, 35 five-day weeks from 9-5?"

There were experiments way back in the 1920's on these lines. In Cambridgeshire, Henry Morris started up 'village colleges' for children in rural areas. The idea was to educate the children right through and to be a focus in community life. "There would be no 'leaving school' — the child would enter at three and leave the college only in extreme old age." Education, the idea was, to be 'on tap' at all times. And then there was the marginally effective, much vaunted, EPA (Educational Priority Areas) project.

But, as a rather more astringent note on the full flood of idealism, another visitor to the community schools, Sue Noylam, had this to say. "The term 'community school' is an exaggeration. If you mean a school with a few facilities open to parents that's OK, but if you mean a radically altered scope of education, then I'm afraid it's not."

Sue visited such schools in Cumberland, Jersey, Cheadle and

Sheppey, and a 'village college' in Swathesey. There are also community schools in Leicestershire, Coventry, Ashby-de-la-Zouche and Sheffield. Most are set in purpose-built buildings. But she says, like so many projects, the headmasters are real dynamos, whereas the rest of the staff are not always with him. And more serious criticism, "They all felt they could be part of the community, but failed in that no working class parental support was evident. As far as adult classes went, they were almost totally middle class women of 40. In Cumberland, for example, they were catering for a local working class population and the workers from the atomic energy plant. The only adults going to the classes were the atomic plant workers — no locals. The local kids were at the youth clubs. That was all.

"And very little contact is actually made with the community. They have ideas, but I think, aren't critical enough of them — they're restricting themselves to traditional educational ideas. They talk about reassessing the role of the school — but are too imbued with the old ideas. Even more significant, there were no community schools in urban areas — which is where the ideas are aimed at. I really came away feeling very pessimistic."

Adult education is not all lace making any more. But the whole question of schooling and community returning to an integrated situation will need a lot of pushing. Can AE offer more than the TV and the pub?



Very Good Mr. Smith! Have a gold star DW.

cartoons by Deborah Williams

direction'...but...'The title is hardly interesting..'

This month we felt that all Spare Parts readers deserved a weekend off from all the hard work, repairing and decorating over the last year. However, just to go and sit in a field or on a beach might not satisfy the boundless energy of some readers so here are a few ideas on what to do with a boring weekend.

conservation corps

If you live or work in a town, and feel choked with fumes and almost crippled with lack of exercise, then the Conservation Corps will take you off for a really healthy and energetic weekend with the inner glow of knowing you are also doing something useful.

It is an organization of active volunteers who do practical conservation work all over the country.

The types of work vary enormously -



from digging back and clearing out overgrown village ponds, to tree planting. Although the trips are both interesting and fun, they ARE hard work.

It is best to wear your oldest and toughest clothes, and to stop worrying about your fingernails...

If you don't feel up to really strenuous work, then select your trip carefully: "Bracken cutting and weeding young tree plantations" in Yorkshire (2-15 July) rather than "Excavation work" in Ironbridge Gorge, Shropshire, (July 21 to Sept*15).

The N.C.C. will provide you with a complete list of all the trips they are organizing from June to September. Their day trips are arranged with transport leaving London Sat or Sun. mornings, returning the same evening. They travel all round the country and you can join the party actually on the site. Prepare for thistle & ragwort pulling from downland in Wiltshire, to repairing flint bridges in Surrey. A number of day trips involve pond clearance, but they will provide the waders..

The weekend trips are organized in the same way except that you take a sleeping bag and prepare for a strange night in a barn, hostel or under canvas.



All food is provided, vegetarians are catered for, and you just pay 50p administration fee per weekend.

It might be advisable to try yourself out on a day or weekend trip before committing yourself to the residential tasks which take place all over the country and can last from four days to two months. The cost to you is your travel to the site, 25p a day, and some hard work. It gives you the chance to visit parts of the countryside that might otherwise be inaccessible to you, to do something really worthwhile if you care about conservation, and, apart from anything else, it is a very cheap way of getting out of the stuffy towns and really enjoying the countryside.

A sample of trips in July includes: "Clearance of laurel invading fine woodlands" in Somerset (2-15 July) "Clearance of forest trails for the Forestry Commission" overlooking Holy Loch, Argyll (12-21 July) "Digging up & removal of Spartina grass from mudflats



WEEKENDS AWAY



& sands" Holy Island, Northumberland.

(18-28 July) "Erecting a number of overspill dams & clearance of overgrown ponds" Suffolk (24-31 July). NATIONAL CONSERVATION CORPS ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, REGENTS PARK LONDON NW1 4RY.

pony trekking



Trotting lazily over the Welsh hills for a weekend might give you a sore back-side, but is fantastically exhilarating. The Pony Trekking Assoc. prefers you to arrange a group of 6 or more people and book about a fortnight in advance. If you are on your own, write to them, and they will try to fit you in with another group. Although they normally arrange treks for a week from Sat to Sat, they also can do weekends, three nights accommodation, food and ponies for around £10. You stay in local guest houses and set off each morning, praying for good weather... "The Pony Trekking Assoc" Caeglas, Llanwrtyd Wells, Brecks. Wales

sport



The "SPORT FOR ALL" campaign was launched last autumn, in preparation for this years bonanza of sporting events, festivals, demonstrations ect. In case you were not aware that any thing unusual had happened, it heralded the production of a few more booklets, and the setting up of a few extra courses for poor down trodden amateur. (Only 47p per head per year are spent on sport in GB, compared with Holland's £1.78p..)

During the summer a number of open courses for general participation are being held at National and borough sports Centres. The National Centres



can provide accommodation if you book, but 'organizations' take priority. Most specialised courses unfortunately are held during the week: ex: ARCHERY, at the centre at Exeter University, July 22-29, £29. CANOEING: elementary introduction to river canoeing, June 23-30, £20.50p. However, "Sport for All" somehow manages to exclude the family, as only one centre, in Epsom, has thought of providing playgroup & creche facilities.

If you are interested in a specific sport, trampolining, archery, cycling etc, it is best to contact your local club for weekend activities. For addresses of local clubs and federations, write to: THE SPORTS COUNCIL, 26 PARK CRESCENT, LONDON W1N 4AJ.

forests

Not only is it 'Sport for All' year, but also 'TREE PLANTING YEAR', nicknamed 'Operation Cinderella'. The Forestry Commission have been working with dogged determination, planting acres of mine waste and spoil tips with thousands of trees and shrubs, in an attempt to reclaim this green and pleasant land.



This is over and above their usual 'plant' of some 70 million trees per annum, and their continuing aim to open up as much forest as possible to the public. There are now seven 'Forest Parks' which, together with the New Forest are open for unrestricted walks.

The 'Silurian Way' is a new spectacular trail through Grizedale forest in the Lake district. It is 9½ miles long & takes a circular route that illustrates all the different aspects of plantation, conservation and the wildlife of the forest. At Grizedale, as with many of the other forest parks, there is a camp site, nature trails, hides for wildlife observation, fishing and "photo safaris".



All the parks, and some forests, have 'Forest Centres', where you can enquire about the trails and guide leaflets to them, about fishing rights, hiring hides and observation towers, and about local clubs where you could join a party going riding or trekking through the forest.

For a lot more information on Britain's largest land holding, leaflets, maps & guides, write to: THE FORESTRY COMMISSION 25 SAVILE ROW, LONDON W1X 2AY.

rambling

If you enjoy just walking or hiking, and want to get some direction into your wanderings, The Ramblers Assoc. will send you a list of all their affiliated groups round the country. They, in turn, produce maps of local footpaths and good 'rambles' in the district. THE RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION. 1/4 CRAWFORD MEWS, YORK STREET, LONDON, W1H 1PT.

P.S: FRUIT PICKING. UNFORTUNATELY NOT WEEKEND WORK. BUT IF YOU WANT INFORMATION ON 'PICKING' SEND A S.A.E TO "WORKING HOLIDAYS" & S.M.C. - SEMANUE GILBERT.

NEWS

In 1971 in England and Wales there were over 4,000 illegitimate births among girls under 17.

This was one of the figures which influenced Lord Aberdare, Minister of State for the Department of Health, to uphold the principle that contraceptive advice, treatment and supplies should be available to under-16s without their parents' consent.

The number of girls under 16 receiving abortions rose from 2,660 in 1971 to 3,099 last year. Abortion figures as a whole rose by 20 per cent during the same period. In hard figures this meant a rise of nearly 30,000 to a record total of over 156,000.

As over a third of these were performed in NHS hospitals, it is arguable that the health service would save money by providing free birth control.

unmarried couple who fear pregnancy will reach boys and girls who 'cannot be bothered with informative literature'.

Apart from the question of the welfare of the young, there is an



increasing awareness of the moral issues posed by the worldwide population explosion.

In 1971 the Government itself appointed a Population Panel to examine the implications for future British policy. The Panel, whose report was published in March this year, opted for a voluntary policy based on free family planning under the NHS.

It ruled out any form of government compulsion to reduce the size of families, for instance by abolishing family allowances, introducing tax allowances to increase the cost of large families, or bringing in laws to restrict the number of children as 'politically, socially and morally repugnant'.

The GP should be in the forefront of any birth control programme, the Panel felt, and contraception should become a part of general health care. Attention was drawn to 'considerable gaps' in the training of junior doctors in the subject.

The Panel estimated that Britain's population will have increased by 10 million by the year 2010. They concluded that there was no need for drastic action now but that unless the population began to be limited by socially acceptable means, 'a situation could arise where the use of persuasive techniques or more direct fiscal measures (or



LOWEST MORTALITY RATE

The infant mortality rate in 1971 was 12.3 per thousand live births - one of the lowest in the world. The maternal mortality rate reduced steadily to zero in 1969 and 1970. The rate of high-risk births to women aged 35 or more was almost halved between 1961 and 1970.

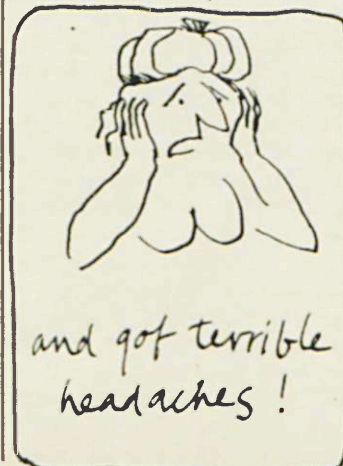
Illegitimate pregnancies and births have dropped since the service became available to the unmarried, and the population of Aberdeen is now only increasing at 0.27% per year.

Attendant social benefits have included a lower incidence of child abuse, an improved pupil-teacher ratio in infant and primary schools and better housing conditions. This encouraging record is largely attributed to the city's promotion of contraception together with health education. Health visitors, social workers and midwives have played an important part.

TOO GREAT A RISK

In London at least, some awareness of this is evident, and family planning is being widely promoted. The first large-scale automatic telephone advice service on family planning has now been started. Patients who telephone 01-637 1818 can hear a recorded message telling them what services are available and how to get in touch with FP clinics.

Moreover, the South West London branch of the Family Planning Association has just issued a comic-strip booklet called 'Too Great a Risk' with the aim of informing teenagers about contraception. The FPA hopes that this story about an



both) to influence population growth might have to be considered'.

SAFETY FIRST

Although Sir Keith, in his compromise decision on contraception, has not fully implemented these recommendations, perhaps the real issue lies elsewhere. For most women, the question is not whether family planning is necessary, or perhaps even whether it is free, but whether existing methods are really safe.

Traditional forms of birth control such as the sheath, the cap and the safe period, are known to have a relatively high failure rate in terms of unwanted births. Even the IUD (coil or loop) is only 98% safe, which is partly what makes the contraceptive Pill so attractive. As family planning becomes more universal, it is reasonable to expect that the Pill will become the choice of the majority.

Yet little is still known of the long-term effects of synthetic hormones on the female body. Scientists may soon be able to produce a contraceptive pill for men, according to recent reports of work being conducted in Boston. The pill - a combination of hormones - should be able to suppress the formation of sperm without impairing the man's sexual drive or performance. However, for the present, it is women who take the Pill. And they take it in ever-increasing numbers.

The thrombosis scare of a few years ago is causing less alarm in medical circles since the introduction of safer low-oestrogen varieties of Pill. Lord Platt, former president of the Royal College of Physicians, speaking during the Contraceptive Debate in the House of Lords, defended the Pill against criticism of side-effects. There was, he said, no immediate cause for alarm of any kind. The rate of thrombosis, which was the serious and dangerous complication of the Pill, had diminished significantly.

PILL ILLS

Some women, he continued, did gain weight, feel a little unwell, become a little depressed or complain of headaches. But it was up to women to decide whether they thought it was worth putting up with these 'minor side-effects'.

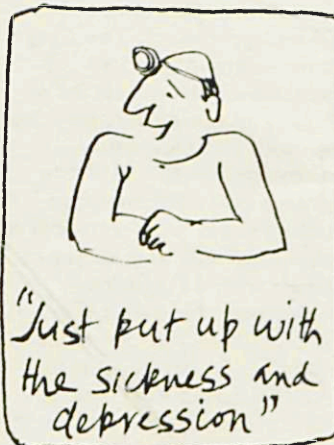
Are these side-effects really so 'minor', we wonder? They may cause only temporary

inconvenience or discomfort, but they may cause considerable distress and anxiety. And either way, they testify to a major upheaval in the metabolic and hormonal balance. Can they really be dismissed so lightly?

Lady Summerskill was less sanguine. During the same debate, she said it had not been proved that birth pills did not cause cancer. And besides, in some cases, they could cause infertility.



A recent article in the British Medical Journal put forward the view that some young and apparently normal women could be adversely affected as regards fertility after taking oral contraceptives for a long period of time. The Pill can cause interference with the function of the hypothalamus and might eventually lead to infertility in such women.



The writer suggested that where a woman exhibited the slightest evidence of menstrual irregularity she should be thoroughly examined before any oral contraceptive was prescribed. And he predicted that cases of infertility would increase 'in these days in which oral contraceptives are regarded as a universal panacea.'

Lady Summerskill was right, too, that the Pill has not yet been fully cleared as regards cancer. A disturbing report appeared recently on the work of Dr Otto Sartorius, a Californian surgeon whose practice is mainly concerned with breast disease.

Dr Sartorius believes that the Pill causes irreversible changes in the structure of the breast tissue of women who take it and that these may eventually lead to breast cancer in certain predisposed individuals.

BIASED ON BREASTS

He admits that, as a specialist in breast disease, he may be biased. But he cites three cases of breast cancer in his own practice, in women aged respectively 23, 26 and 27, where he thinks the connection with taking the Pill was 'highly coincidental'.

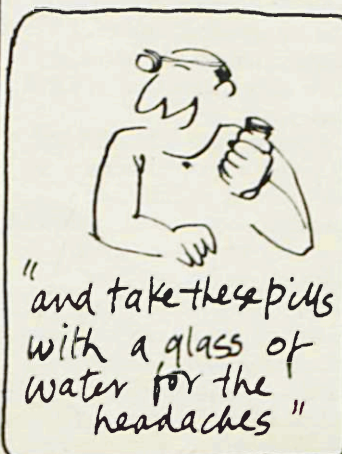
These cases all followed several months on the Pill in girls who previously had normal breasts, but who developed the changes in breast tissue he has dubbed 'the snowball effect' to a marked degree. He describes the changes as follows: 'the glandular tissue (of women on the Pill) enlarges, and this fills with contrast material so you get a snowball effect on the end of the (glandular) tree. This you don't see in any other condition (including pregnancy).'

In a test to establish the truth of his findings Dr Sartorius examined the breasts of 200 girls - half on the Pill and half not - who were sent to him 'blind' with only numbers to identify them. He had no discussion with them, but simply palpated their breasts.

'At the end of the study I was 92% accurate in telling which ones were on the Pill and 90% accurate in which ones were not', he says. 'And several of the girls who were not on the Pill when I thought they were turned out to have had children or cystic mastitis.'

Needle biopsies performed on 18 Pill takers and 18 controls showed early signs of mastitis, sclerosis, adenosis, papillomatosis and hyperplasia in those on the Pill. All these girls were under 22 and none had had children.

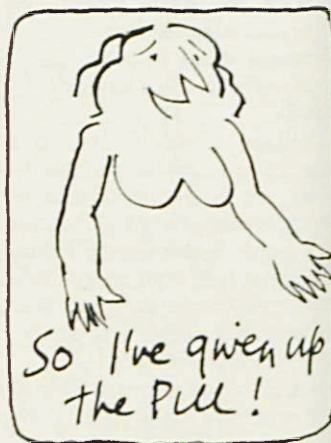
Studies of girls off the Pill for five years still show the 'snowball effect'. Dr Sartorius



believes that those who experience marked breast enlargement, soreness and other side-effects when they start the Pill are those most affected by the changes in tissue structure.

CANCEROUS

He concludes, 'Cancer of the cervix remains "in situ" seven or eight years before it becomes invasive. The same is true of the breast. So my worry is what we are going to see in five to ten years. I can't say the birth control pills cause cancer. But they sure cause every change that we recognise pathologically as being conducive to carcinoma.'



Scares notwithstanding, new developments promise to make the Pill safer all the time. A Pill which contains only 30 millionths of a gram of oestrogen (the hormone ingredient implicated in blood-clotting cases) is being tested and may become available 'shortly'. Announcing this to a conference of the Royal College of General Practitioners this month, Sir Richard Doll, professor of medicine at Oxford, said the new Pill could have the risk of death to women taking it. Also being tested, this time by the FPA, is an 'instant' contraceptive pill which can be taken a few hours before intercourse. Each tablet contains 1mg of clogestone acetate, a synthetic progesterone which causes brief temporary changes in the fallopian tubes.

This can be taken up to three or four times a week. The manufacturers may eventually reformulate it so that it will be effective if taken immediately before or after intercourse. Side-effects, judging from extensive trials in South America, are minimal.

Meanwhile, one of the mini-Pills which became available recently could provide the answer for women uneasy about taking the traditional oestrogen-progestogen combination Pill. The mini-Pills contain progestogen only and work, not by the usual method of suppressing ovulation, but by



I've given up the diet...

preventing the penetration of sperm into the uterus. This is achieved by changes in the mucosal 'plug'.

The risk of pregnancy is frequently higher than with the 'combined' brands, but side-effects are far fewer and less troublesome. All in all, a major advance in oral contraception.



The sickness, depression and headaches have gone

MYSTERIOUS INFERTILITY

Talk of contraception and population control is still sadly irrelevant to one important group of women, but research being conducted in Sweden and London may soon give more hope to these - the women whose marriages are infertile for reasons no doctor has yet discovered.

This group comprises a surprising 15 per cent of married



I've also given up Sex.

couples and until now, they were often told that their infertility must be due to emotional factors - hardly a consoling explanation. Now results of preliminary work at the University of Uppsala indicate that infection with very simple micro-organisms might account for almost a third of such cases of childlessness.

The organisms, known as mycoplasmas, are already believed to cause abnormally low birthweights and spontaneous abortions. Now a study of 52 couples whose infertility has lasted for at least five years showed that 89 per cent of them carried T-mycoplasmas infection, either in the cervical mucus of the woman or the seminal fluid of the man.

When couples were treated with doxycycline, a drug which eradicates mycoplasmas infection, 29 per cent achieved a pregnancy within five months. Further research is now underway to establish the exact connection with a view to making treatment generally available as soon as the findings are confirmed.

Few people would deny the urgent need to enable everyone who really craves the experience of parenthood to bear a child. However, there are those whose concern for the population problem is such that they are prepared to suggest pretty outlandish solutions to it.

One such is Professor John Postgate, who recently made headlines by suggesting that the global answer was a sex-selective pill that would assure a 90 per cent rate of accuracy for parents choosing to have male children.

Since the birth rate depends largely on the proportion of females, a rapid transition to a female minority by means of a 'male child only pill' would be the fastest way to reduce population growth, he argues. Because of the prejudice in many parts of the world in favour of male children, 'millions would leap at the opportunity to breed male. No compulsion or even propaganda would be necessary.'

Such a pill does not exist at present, but Professor Postgate is confident that it is easily within the reach of scientific ingenuity.

And what of women in this scheme of things? During the 'transitional' phase females would outnumber males by anything between five and 50 to one.

Professor Postgate's own words on the social consequences of this speak for themselves.

'All sorts of taboos would be expected and it is probable that a form of purdah would become necessary. Women's right to work, even to travel alone freely, would probably be forgotten transiently. Polyandry might well become accepted in some societies; some might treat their women as queen ants, others as rewards for the most outstanding (or most determined) males.'

Quite apart from the horrors and degradation conjured up by this sci-fi vision, there is a basic flaw in Postgate's argument, as Dr Malcolm Potts, medical director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, has pointed out. We are all agreed on the urgency of reducing population growth, but why propose a solution as radical and distasteful as Postgate's when existing methods of contraception are not freely available? 'Why design a new sprinkler for your garden when you refuse to turn the tap on full?' asks Dr Potts. All over the world, the problem is the same. 'Nearly everywhere tiresome, paradoxical and unnecessary barriers separate the consumer from the service which it is his

or her basic Human Right to have made available.' He goes on to cite anomalies in the attitudes of individual countries to birth control: in Japan, for instance, over a million abortions are performed a year, yet intrauterine devices and the Pill are illegal; and in India family



Now I just take the glass of water instead

planning receives high priority, and the abortion law has been reformed, but the Government does not promote the use of oral contraceptives.

Dr Potts' conclusion is that families must be accorded the respect to decide for themselves whether to use contraceptives and, if so, what kind. But above all the means of fertility control must be made meaningfully available. For it is not, he says, lack of social responsibility, as Professor Southgate would have us believe, but 'lack of the necessary ingenuity to find one's way through the maze of bureaucratic obstructions and the hurdles created by the medical profession which is the cause of many large families'.

2010 A.D.



WOMEN IN PRINT.

"If you tried to get a job in printing, girl, the national press would come to a stand still."

That was the attitude from the shop floor when I decided to make a few enquiries into what is described as a traditional male stronghold - the printing industry.

'Print', the house journal of the National Graphical Association, this month (April) carries what no doubt is intended as a plea on behalf of women's rights by Mr. Woodrow Wyatt former labour M.P. and printing employer. Appearing as it does in a journal almost exclusively for men, it reeks of over-bearing condescension, with such phrases as: "I am prepared to say that the general run of men is more intelligent and efficient than the general run of women." In the next paragraph, "It is probable that the best men craftsmen are better than any woman could ever be. We all know that the best men chefs, dress designers, poets, playwrights, musicians, composers are better by far than anything women have ever

produced or are likely to produce in these departments. But it does not follow that women who are competent in these should not be allowed to have a go."

In all fairness to Mr. Woodrow Wyatt he does put forward some logical arguments for employing women in the printing trades, and even goes so far as to forecast that the female invasion will inevitably take place; in the headline, "As the Chinese say, If rape is inevitable, relax and enjoy it."

In the same edition of 'Print', was the opening of the new Graphic House at Gloucester; headquarters of the Three Shires Branch of the N.G.A.. Watched by several gentlemen, the tape is being cut by a lady.

Four spokesmen at the newly opened Graphic House cheerfully pointed out that the ceremony should have been performed by a man, but, as he could not make it, the lady kindly stepped into the breach.

Taking this outdated attitude to women to the top, I spoke to John Broom a national official of the N.G.A. at Bedford, who said when I informed him that I was investigating for a women's lib. magazine, "Out of 103,000 to 110,000 members, we have

so far only allowed 700 women to creep in." However, he continued a little less facetiously to explain that the N.G.A. is an amalgamation of 5 unions, and that the printing trade is an ancient craft which clings to its traditions. The 7 year apprenticeship is now reduced to 5 years, but it is still very much a closed shop - father to son tradition, and they rarely if ever advertise through labour exchanges.

Mr. Broom went on to say that at present simplified keyboards, similar to typewriters are being introduced, "This means that women who have had typing experience could find employment in print, in the future," he said and "Women definitely do not and never will get an equal chance. Union policy is that the man is the breadwinner, and job opportunity will always go to the men in preference to women candidates."

However, should a woman manage to land a printing job, (on a simplified machine of course,) she will at least get equal pay, unless in the litho department, where the rate is a few pence lower than the male rate.

I asked a Gloucestershire printing firm about my chances of taking an apprenticeship, and the boss Mr. G. Peers said, "Not a hope, except possibly on the litho," I said that I was most interested in training as a compositor, and pointed out that my I.Q. was somewhat higher than that of the apprentices he already employs. Mr. Peers replied, "If I train you for 5 years I get no return, but a man must stick at his trade to support his family. There's no future in training women, the man is the breadwinner." He went on to explain that in any case the machinery was far too complicated for any woman to master even in five years, and the amount of heavy lifting involved was far too great for a woman.

Old traditions die hard, for anyone determined to break down a male stronghold the printing industry holds plenty of challenge.

Rosemary Stacey

CRAZY UNION.

"In order to combat the reactionary institutions of mental hospitals and manipulative psychiatry", mental patients and ex-patients from hospitals as diverse as Broadmoor, Shenley and Marlborough met on Wednesday March 21 at Paddington Day Hospital and agreed unanimously to set up a Mental Patients Union.

The meeting, which was called by a pilot committee, was attended by between 100 and 150 people, mainly mental patients and ex-patients. By a large majority, the meeting decided that only patients and ex-patients could join the union; there would, however, be a

non-decision making associate membership open to all.

The union drew up a draft declaration of intent, the main points of which are that they will seek to represent mental patients and ex-patients wherever they require such assistance, will fight to make effective existing formal rights to representation, and will seek new rights to representation. The union will work towards the abolition of compulsory treatment, and demands the effective right of patients to refuse specific treatments, as well as the right to refuse to act as guinea pigs for medical experiments.

It will also fight to break the barriers imposed by the hospital authorities between the patients and the outside world. Such barriers include censorship of letters and phone calls, and restrictions on visitors.

For information write to: Mental Patients Union, c/o Flat 1, 13 Christchurch Road, London N8, or by telephoning Andy Roberts, 01-804-2357.

POLLUTING POLLUTION.

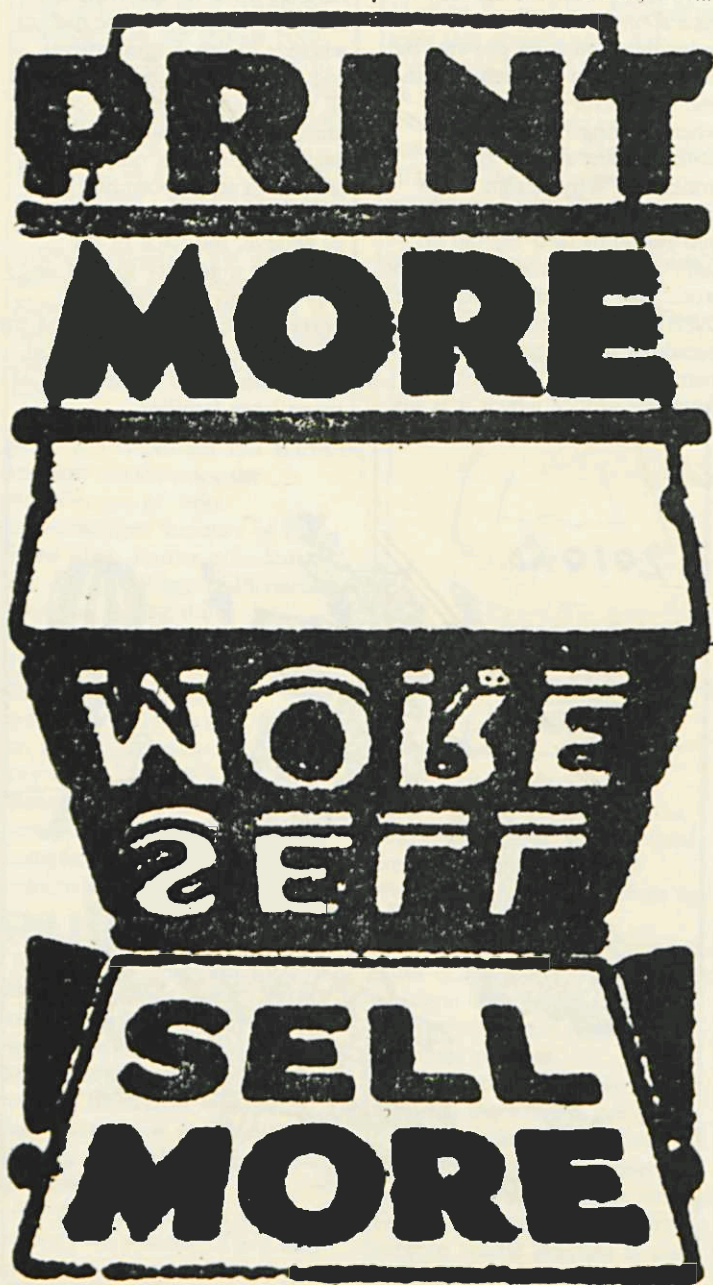
Chemicals used to break up oil spills may do more harm than the oil they disperse, according to a Swedish research team.

Two years ago the team set out to study the effects on sea life of oil spills and the chemicals used to clean them. Their initial findings, just published, indicate that the chemical emulsifiers disrupt basic balances of marine flora and fauna.

Algae and other sea plants can survive long periods under an oil slick. But as soon as an emulsifier is added the plants often lose colour and die, cutting off the source of oxygen for marine animal life. Ironically, the researchers said, the emulsifiers alone are not dangerous, but only become so in combination with certain kinds of oil.

The scientists emphasized that their conclusions were preliminary and had to be researched further.

Slithy Toves News



Smile while you're makin' it
Laugh while you're takin' it
Even though you're fakin' it
Nobody's gonna know...



The words are from **O LUCKY MAN!** Alan Price wrote the songs for this new movie about a young man's search for the things everybody wants. Money. Success. Wisdom.

The smile belongs to Malcolm

McDowell. From 'If ' to 'A Clockwork Orange' he's been right on target. Right attitude. Right choices. He's got lots of reasons to smile.

The spirit of **O LUCKY MAN!** is director Lindsay Anderson. He

makes a movie every five years. You don't forget them.

'This Sporting Life' started it. 'If ' was a timely explosion. **O LUCKY MAN!** takes it a step further. From May 3rd. **WARNER RENDEZVOUS** Leicester Square.

Lynce © KPM Music/Jarrow Music Ltd.

MRS REDFERN'S BATTLE WITH NOISE, FUMES, VIBRATIONS, THE COUNCIL AND THE LOCAL PAPER.

Mrs Redfern lives alone, widowed for 40 years, her son died 5 years ago. A doll sits on the armchair and the windows are blackened by oil fumes.

Since October 1971, Mobile Transport Services has been entrenched next door, operating a rustproofing and refrigerator storage business at all hours of the day and night. The vibrations from a cement mixer in the passageway beneath her front room have broken her prized ornaments. Mrs Redfern takes sleeping pills every night to combat the never ending noise. (Very recently the police have stopped nightwork but only after eighteen months of complaints from local residents). Noise is not the only menace. Fumes from the oil pervade the whole area, though the firm's lawyers describe the smell as 'rather pleasant'. Mrs Redfern once slipped on an unavoidable pool of oil outside her front door and no one discovered her for an hour. Even the police have noticed the danger of oil on the roads but when Mobile Transport Services were successfully prosecuted for polluting the highway, the £5 fine was hardly sufficient to put them out of business.

The issue is further complicated. Permission for the firm to continue operations was finally suspended on December 28 last year. Residents called a public enquiry, yet they were left ill-informed and often confused by the Corporation - they were offered three possible dates for the exact day on which the first permission expired. Now an enquiry is being held in camera by the Department of the Environment. Given the vagaries of the law, even if Mobile Transport Services lose their appeal production can go banging and fuming on in this residential area for at least another year.

We wonder why the Brighton press has not taken up this case, and shown its metal. A petition, signed by 41 residents of Centurion Road has been ignored

- the 'Argus' claimed the wording was dangerous even though the petitioners had checked it thoroughly for any possibility of libel. Perhaps it is the regular advertisements placed by Ziebart's, Mobile Transport Services's parent company which has ensured that the paper has ignored the social implications of the case and instead only concentrated on what they see as Mrs Redfern's eccentricities. Had Centurion Road been inhabited by more powerful members of the community instead of students and old ladies, it seems likely that the fumes and noise would have gone long ago.

FATHER, DEAR FATHER.

The Swedish government has announced a new reform in its health programme that would extend maternity benefits to men.

At present, not only is hospital care free, but Swedish mothers receive a flat fee from the government for every child they have. Women who are employed also receive a daily payment for six months after birth, so they can stay at home with the newly-born child.

Under the new proposal, either the mother or the father could stay at home with the baby during the six-month period and collect the child care benefit. The amount paid would be 90% of that parent's regular salary, up to a maximum of £5,000 a year.

The new family benefit package also would extend to men compensation for staying home from work to look after sick children, and the extension of the various benefits to cover adopted children.

IF I WAS A CARPENTER & A LADY..

When Lilli Lenz walked into a hardware store in Santa Cruz, California to purchase a framing hammer, the salesman asked, "Would you like it wrapped as a gift?"

But 20-year-old, 120-pound Lilli needed the hammer for her job - she is the first female member of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners of America, Local No. 829.

The young carpentress says when she is out on a job and meets her fellow workers for the first time, she gets the most "incredible, classic double takes". Lilli graduated in December, with a degree in English and American history.

Why did she trade the Elizabethan and Jeffersonian eras for a bagful of roofing nails?

Here is her story.

"After I graduated, I tried teaching a class at UC and thought I might go on teaching - it seemed an easy way out and

I had no other skills," she says. "But I was tired of school - I didn't want to go to graduate school.

"One thing that bothers me about women in society is they have no practical control over their lives.

"I just recently saw a woman who had a flat tire out on Soquel Drive. There was no way she could help herself.

"I felt incapable too, having to rely on other people. I don't mind relying on men or women, but I feel like I'd like to take care of myself.

"Down at the union hall, they asked me if going into carpentry was a publicity stunt. The publicity angle is secondary - carpentry is a basic skill which I would like to learn.

"This experience will help me, no matter what I do later."

She says the fact that she had a job with Barnhart Construction Company waiting for her helped her get into the union.

Ben Walker, a superintendent with the company, and the one who hired Lilli, says, "We have been plagued by rain this winter, and on several occasions, she showed up for work when some of the men wouldn't come out of their houses because of the rain."

Barbara Burklo



THE CONTINUING STORY OF TAMPAX, V.A.T., & THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER..

In the last issue we ran a short article on the monstrous effects of VAT. A reader wrote to Anthony Barber on the subject of VAT and sanitary towels .. This was the reply:

HM CUSTOMS AND EXCISE

Value Added Tax

You wrote recently to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about value-added tax and sanitary protection. I have been asked to reply as this Department is responsible for administering value-added tax.

I should explain that unlike purchase tax which was imposed selectively, VAT is essentially a comprehensive tax on supplies of goods and services. But relief from VAT has been given where there are strong economic or social grounds including certain important areas of consumer expenditure such as food, housing, fuel and power, bus and train fares, young children's clothing (including babies nappies) and footwear. Thus a significant proportion of family expenditure is relieved from VAT.

The broad base of the tax has enabled the Chancellor of the Exchequer to set the standard rate of tax at the relatively modest level of 10 per cent but the wide coverage has made it inevitable that some items have become taxable for the first time - sanitary towels and tampons are examples of this. But too many special reliefs would mean that the principal feature of VAT, broad coverage at a relatively low rate, would be lost.

However, the replacement of purchase tax by VAT has reduced the incidence of tax on a wide range of goods including soap, shampoos, dentifrices, cosmetics, perfumes and other toiletries. The Government has taken powers to ensure that reductions in taxation will be reflected in shop prices. Although nobody likes paying higher prices for items that one cannot avoid buying, I understand that the cost of 10 per cent VAT on sanitary towels and tampons for the average woman is likely to be of the order of 25p in the course of a year. This additional

cost might well be offset by savings of tax on some of the items of everyday use on which tax has been reduced.

I think that on reflection you will agree that the tax should be considered as a whole rather than by its effect on a single item.

LETTER TO US..

Dear Spare Rib,
I've been on sickness benefit since February and have had to adjust to living on £6.21 per week, instead of £20.
Since having to restrict my budget

greatly I've taken greater pains than before over what I buy and how much each item costs. This may seem strange in this time of rising prices but having been a 'busy working girl' with a reasonable income and few responsibilities I never worried much about money until I found that I'd spent it all.

Of all the price increases, that which annoys me most the VAT levied on Sanitary Protection. I see no reason whatsoever for this.

Why, in heavens name, are sanitary towels and tampons classed as a luxury? Is the clean-shavenness of men really preferable to hygienic women? Apparently so, as razor blades are zero-rated!

Never mind ladies! We can all be clean, exotically perfumed and painted and free from period pain at no extra cost.

The press quoted a cost of 17p per month per woman for sanitary protection. Could this have been an estimate for women on the pill with reduced periods? I certainly spend much more and according to my friends, so do they.

Ideally, sanitary protection should be government subsidised. But if we can't have that wouldn't it be at least fair to charge a 'reasonable' price for such necessary items.

I wonder what is going to be sacrificed by women on low incomes and restricted budgets for the sake of hygiene? Food? Clothing?

Yours sincerely,
Morfydd Lloyd,
12b Summer Lane,
Barnsley



"You can count on me!"

...SHE NEVER FAILS HER FRIENDS....

nor feels inclined to cancel engagements because of Nature's little handicaps. Proper provision is secured by approved scientific protection so that moments of embarrassment are things of the past to all ladies who adopt "HOSEZENE" SANITARY TOWELS. Made in three forms to meet every need.

- **SOLUBLE** Capable of easy disposal when travelling, etc. There is no equal to Hosezene Soluble, 1/-, 1/2, 1/6 per dozen.
- **PERFECT** With a reputation of 40 years' unequalled leadership as the Towel with the knitted cover and loop ends. 1/- to 2/9 per dozen.
- **COMPRESSED** Full size Soluble Towel compressed into a compass of a match-box. Most convenient for ladies when travelling. 1/6, 7/-, 2/6 per dozen.

Obtainable from all branches of Boots Cash Chemists, and leading Drapers, Stores, etc.

A FREE SAMPLE of the Hosezene "Perfect" or "Soluble" will be sent on request to "F.P." THE HOSEZENE CO., LTD., NOTTINGHAM. This offer applies to the U.K. only.

Insist on

TRADE MARK

SANITARY HOSEZENE TOWELS

BRITISH MADE

SOLD BY ALL DRAPERS, STORES ETC



SELL OUT.

After seeing the following ad in April 3rd's issue of the Observer, Muriel Smith decided not to just let it pass - here's her letter and Miele's reply. As she said in a letter to us "Tongue in Cheek", my foot.

Dear Sir,
I write to protest at the wording of your advertisement, which appeared in last Sunday's Observer and also on the 18th March.

The parts which seem to me to be particularly offensive I have underlined in red, on the enclosed cutting. I suppose that it is aimed at the male, presupposing that he is to foot the bill. However it is a very out-of-date supposition that the little woman would find nothing more inspiring to do with free time than cook HIS favourite supper.

You are only perpetuating the image that women are no more nor less than kitchen slaves. May I suggest that it would have been a better idea had you said that she would have had more free time to enrich her own life style?

Women in this day and age are attracted by the idea of **FREEDOM FROM THE KITCHEN**, not freedom from one irksome task in order to have time for another.

In case you think this letter is from a militant young libber: I will state now that I am a middle-aged mother of two - what you would call An Ordinary Housewife.

Yours,
Muriel Smith

Dear Madam,
We are very sorry indeed to learn from your letter of April 3rd that you disapprove of our advertisement for our washing machine in last Sunday's Observer. When our advertising agents arranged and we approved the advertisement, it was certainly not our intention to upset potential customers with our tongue in cheek approach, and yours is the only complaint we have received. Nevertheless, we are most grateful for your strong views on the matter and respect them fully.

Yours faithfully,
K.H. Wedekind,
General Manager,
Miele Company Ltd.

EELS AWAY

Mrs Gillian Hemmings, 26, became the first woman-world eel eating champion when she ate half a pound of young eels in 53 seconds. After beating five other ladies to the prize, Mrs Hemming's only comment was 'I couldn't eat another one'.



THE KEY TO

HAPPINESS!

"I'm going to be married next month, and life's such a whirl of good times to me now! And to think that for years I had read the advertisements about the 'Fascinating Womanhood' books, and wouldn't even send for that wonderful little booklet that describes them, until Joan made me. I can't imagine why I was so foolish, but I suppose it was because I had the wrong idea about those books. But I found them so practical and helpful, that I should not be in so fortunate a position now if I had not bought them."

"They showed me how to make my personality so attractive that my appearance took second place. They showed me where and how to meet the kind of men I wanted to meet—how to make them interested in me. How to use certain little secret principles that win lasting affection, and, yes! how to inspire the proposal."

How to make each other happier.

HIS

The Miele 429 is built like the best car you can buy. It has thicker steel, stronger motors and harder-wearing bearings and shafts. And all its finishes last. Inside, stainless steel; outside, tough beautiful vitreous enamel.

The Miele 429 is fully-automatic, so your wife has more time to spend on nice things, like cooking your favourite supper on washdays. All you have to spend is £199.

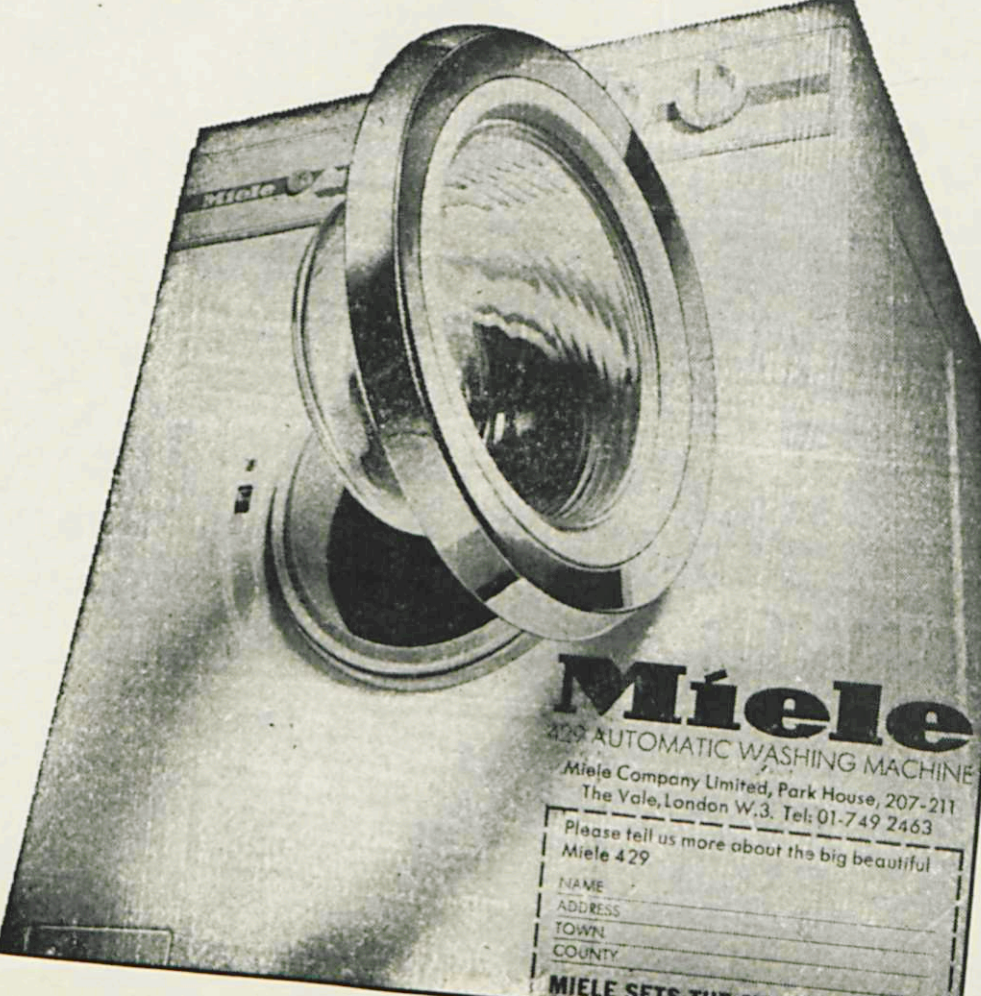
Why doesn't one of you fill in the coupon and send it off today?

HERS

The Miele 429 is built with you in mind. All you do is select the programme (there are sixteen different ones for every type of load) and the 429 automatically gets on with a perfect wash — while you get on with whatever you want to do.

Like cooking that special treat that washdays would never allow.

Wouldn't it be nice to have a Miele round the house.



Miele

429 AUTOMATIC WASHING MACHINE

Miele Company Limited, Park House, 207-211 The Vale, London W.3. Tel: 01-749 2463

Please tell us more about the big beautiful Miele 429

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TOWN _____

COUNTY _____

MIELE SETS THE STANDARD

DESPITE THE COVER PRICE INCREASE THERE IS STILL ONE MORE CHANCE TO SUBSCRIBE TO SPARE RIB AT ONLY £2.00 A YEAR INCLUDING POSTAGE (IN GREAT BRITAIN.) WRITE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS HERE AND SEND IT WITH A CHEQUE OR POSTAL ORDER TO SPARE RIBS LTD. No. 9 NEWBURGH STREET LONDON W1A 4XS

TEESIDE TATTLE. SITTING PRETTY.

A sit-in with more than the usual comfort of such demonstrations has forced Teesside council to put forward a compromise solution. Twenty mothers sat on playground swings and roundabouts stopping work from starting on the £6m Teesside Parkway road. They were protesting at a plan to turn the play area at Longbank estate, Ormesby into a compound for machinery.

The council has suggested that the playground be resited in an area of the residents own choice. They also pledged to rebuild the original play area when road works end in two years' time. Meanwhile, work has been temporarily suspended.

BALLS-OFF.

The woman who threatened to put nine year old Kevin Docherty's ball in the dustbin soon wished she had let the kid play in peace. The indignant boy set about collecting 150 signatures near his home in Lady Edith's Park, Scarborough and then held a meeting with Councillor Eric Leggs who promised to let Kevin and his friends have some land as a play area of their own.

BLOOD & GUTS IN BUTE STREET.

"Animals are running wild to get away from the smell of blood.

Last year a sheep jumped through the window of a neighbour's house. Straw and filth are left for us to clean up as well as the blood and offal dropped when the waggon comes to take it away," says Mrs. Nora Alderton, a member of the Town Centre People's Group, Stockton. She lives in a corner terraced house across the road from the Co-operative Society's abattoir and warehouse, and describes it as a "hell on earth". Large lorries and three-tier cattle trucks containing pigs, sheep and cattle cannot negotiate the slaughter house entrance and have to unload in the street.

Mrs. Alderton has asked drivers to switch off their engines while loading and unloading because the vibrations are causing walls to crack and her gas oven to come away from its fittings. Articulated lorries are breaking up the pavement on the street corner.

No-one at the Stockton or Middlesbrough offices of the Co-operative Society were available to comment or back up the unprintable remarks of their drivers when tackled with residents complaints. The Rev. Michael Plunkett, secretary of the People's Group has taken the matter up with Stockton MP Bill Rodgers. Their first letter to the Society received a reply of regret, the second was ignored. But so far its only animal blood and guts that are running in Bute Street.

Jean O'Keeffe : Teesside

CLASSIFIED

●CONTACTS UNLIMITED.

The dating service that always pays personal attention to selecting dates that really appreciate you and your scene. Free questionnaire 01-387 8150 (24 hrs), or 2 Gt. Marlborough St., W.1.

●Sappho Magazine. Published by homosexual women for all women Monthly 30p inc. post. BCM/PETREL London WC1V 6XX. Meetings first Monday each month. Upstairs Room, 7.30 pm Euston Tavern, Judd St/Euston Rd London NW1.

●Exclusive female only correspondence contacts, etc. For details without obligation send SAE - "Ariadne", The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.

●Advertising Executive. 26 years old and very lonely heterosexual transvestite seeks sympathetic woman living anywhere in the South East with a view to a genuine friendship. Please reply to Box no. 102

■ Women - if you're homosexual or bisexual why not join the Campaign for Homosexual Equality? Make new friends; help fight for equality. For more details write to Liz Stanley, CHE, 28 Kennedy Street, Manchester

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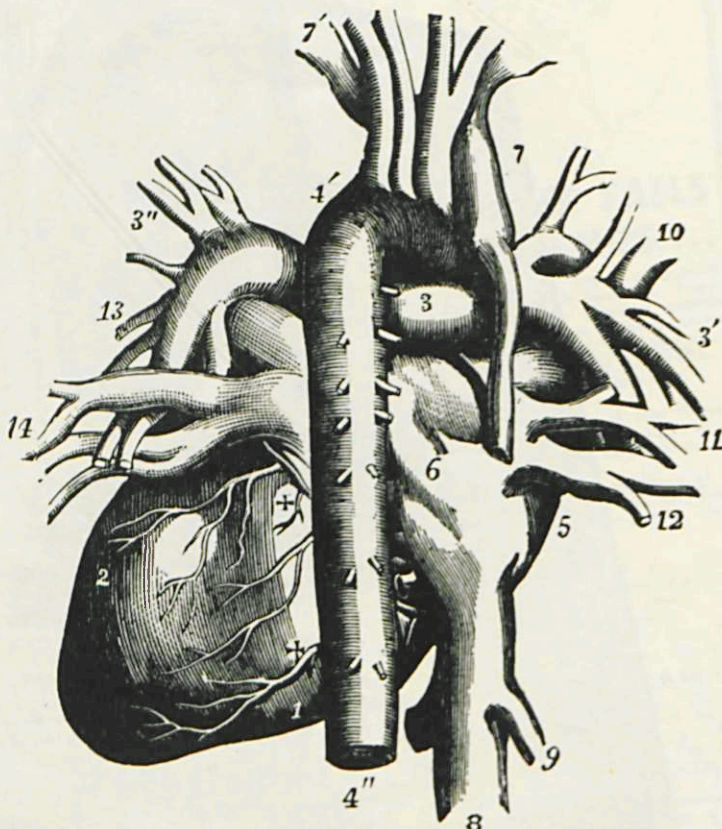
■ Dressmaking, design and alterations. Write to: Marilyn Jarrett, 57 City Road, Bristol 2.

■ Qualified Astrologer - sympathetic, accurate reading. 01-789-6756

■ Health Massage. Improve circulation, energy flow, tone tissue, reduce muscular tension. Esalen, Shiatsu, Bio-energetic methods. Beth Thomson 221 5779, 10-6pm weekdays.

■ Womens Liberation Workshop, 3 Shavers Place SW1 (telephone 01-839-3918) ALL women welcome. Send sae for information.

Classified advertising rates: 5p per word, box numbers 50p. Must be pre-paid and sent to Spare Rib, 9 Newburgh Street, London W1A 4XS. Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse classified ads. Please make all cheques and postal orders payable to Spare Ribs Ltd.



In Spring three important exhibitions of women's art opened. They were group shows, and in all of them I sensed the excitement and stimulation of shared ideas yet each of the artists preserved a personal approach.

"WOMAN POWER"

Five feminist artists brought together by common aims were responsible for the controversial exhibition at Swiss Cottage library. Their styles vary widely from Ann Berg's bright colours and sinuous lines to Monica Sjoo's almost austere canvases, and their subjects range from Beverley Skinner's exploration of matriarchal mythology to Liz Moore's perceptive portraits. However, they share a determination to express their experiences as women, to portray the spirit of the Women's Movement and to challenge the male dominated art world with both the form and content of their pictures.

Everytime they exhibit they create an extraordinary response. Because of threats and complaints by the public, the police visited the exhibition bringing in their wake the critics and reporters who had virtually ignored the show until then.

The porn squad was called in apparently because a number of the paintings show women giving birth. Monica Sjoo originally turned away from abstract art to feminism and figurative painting after the birth of her first child. She found childbirth both "dignified and incredible" and it led her to question societies view of women. She began to paint pictures of women in childbirth as strong, dignified and immensely self possessed, in a style accessible to everyone. No-body could seriously consider such paintings obscene or liable to corrupt children.

The exhibition at Swiss Cottage was one of the most animated shows I have ever visited. I was constantly stopped by people eager to air their views on the pictures, and there was a queue

waiting to write in the visitors book. Comments varied from "Right on sister", "This says it all" to "While you are burning your bra, burn your paintings too".

The artists believe that the hostile comments were not so much an attack on the paintings as a reaction against Women's Liberation. I am not sure. We have all become so accustomed to accepting a work of art as a cross between a toy, a stockmarket bond and a sacred object that many people were actually embarrassed and bewildered by the frankly political and emotional nature of the women's pictures. Polemical art is such a rarity in England that we feel uncomfortable and defensive. We expect art to provide only aesthetic pleasure and entertainment and certainly not to preach Women's Liberation. We are used to indoctrination in ads but not in art.

It's not surprising that polemical painting is rarely seen - there could scarcely be a more difficult medium. If a message is to be conveyed forcibly in two dimensional images it is hard to avoid cliches. I have nothing against polemical art, indeed the Women's Movement has already mothered the excellent Women's Street Theatre, but with painting the danger of being trite or

being misunderstood is greater.

The danger is well illustrated by Monica Sjoo's picture "God Giving Birth", it is certainly not a cliched image but it is misunderstood. She discusses ideas behind her work in the pamphlet "Towards a Revolutionary Feminist Art" and anyone who has considered the implication of a matriarchal god appreciates what a strong symbol she has created in her painting. However, paintings provide images not arguments and some people accused her of blasphemy. At the public meeting to discuss the exhibition the five artists tried bravely to organize constructive discussion but it was impossible because there was so much rhetoric and so much anger about. Ann Berg attempted to explain that they were aiming to "raise women's consciousnesses to be aware of themselves as creative beings". Someone replied, "only by liberating the entire working class will women artists be free". Soon the meeting erupted into a chaotic variety of behavior with one man ripping up his T shirt

and declaring "I may have a man's body but I have a woman's soul", while another man leapt to his feet with a tirade against his mother and someone else circled the meeting crying that we were all "moral vigilantes".

If you were a frustrated member of the meeting and really wanted to hear the artists views, read their pamphlet "Towards a Revolutionary Feminist Art" 10p from The Womens Workshop, 3 Shavers Place, Haymarket, Piccadilly, London W1.

"THREE FRIENDS"

Three friends have broken the male monopoly on that enormous exhibition space, Gallery House. Carla Liss, Susan Hiller and Barbara Schwartz managed to assemble an exhibition of their work despite the fact that Gallery House was on the verge of closing and could offer no assistance.

Originally they wanted to organize a huge exhibition of women artists' work but their idea was rejected. It's a pity because the series of exhibitions held last year at Gallery House called "Survey of The Avant Garde" gave us little clue what women are doing now as the series included the work of only one woman artist.

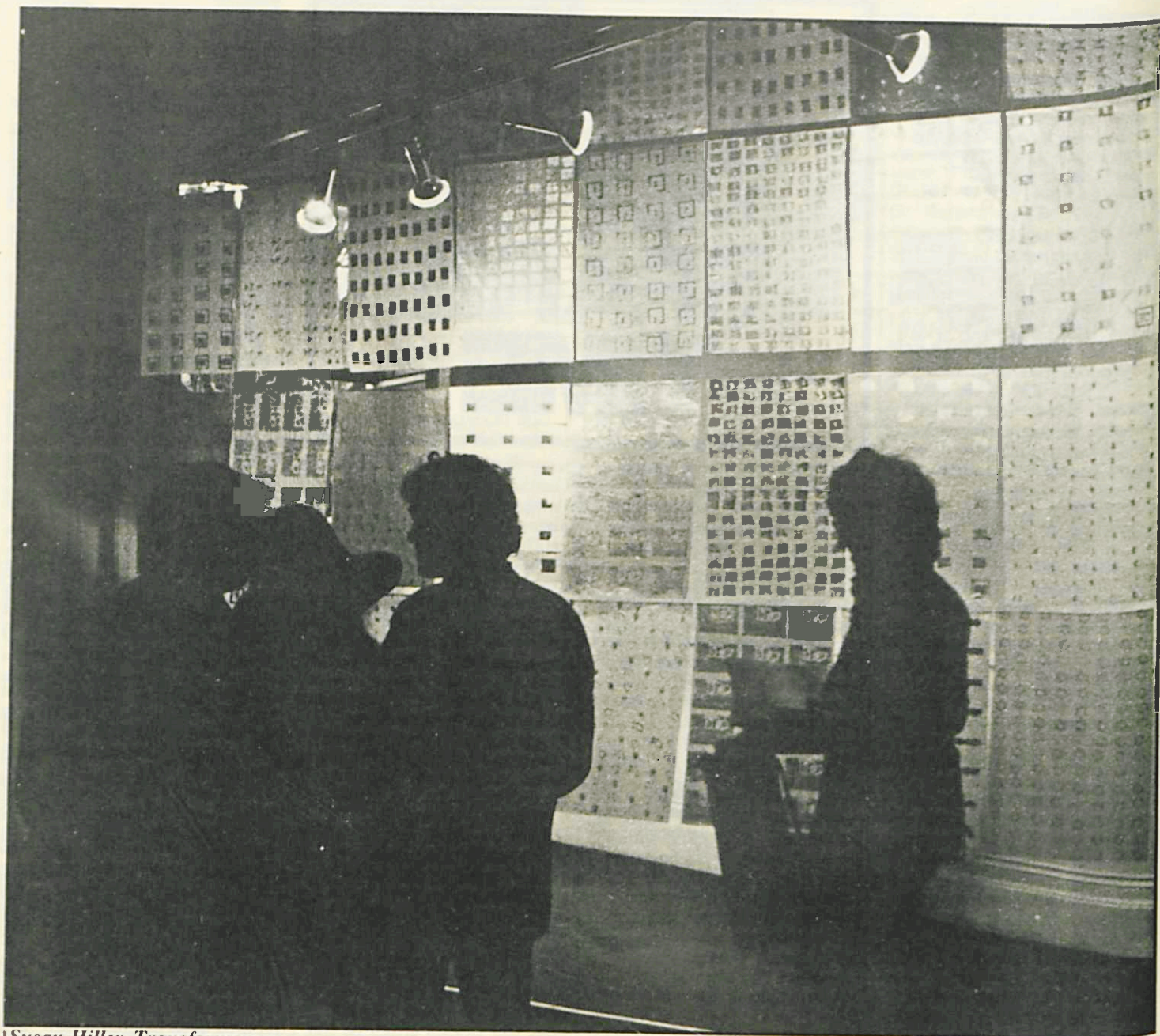
The "Three Friends" proved beyond doubt that no survey of the avant garde is worthy of the name without women's work. Carla Liss and Barbara Schwartz showed films. Susan Hiller exhibited the large tissue paper construction "Transformer" and, under her pseudonym Ace Possible (phonetic Spanish American for "it is possible") gave a slide show which cleverly opened our eyes to the high premium we place on the mindless assimilation of facts. Carla Liss created an entire



SPARE TIME



High Priestess Beverley Skinner



Susan Hiller Transformer

environment with simultaneous projections on four walls. She calls her film "Dovecote" as it transports us into a dove's world in the centre of a stone tower. To the sound of doves cooing and beating wings she shows us a constantly changing bird's eye view of the dark inside of the tower and the bright trees and sky through openings in the stone work. Barbara Schwartz films included "Homemovie", a highly personal exploration of different techniques, and images that caught her eye.

You will have an opportunity to see their work this Autumn when, together with other women artists, they plan to take over a street of houses vacated for demolition and hold an open women's exhibition. The exhibition, to be called "Women's Work," promises to be an entirely new kind of show. Anyone will be able to submit anything they believe others might want to see and there will be discussions, documentation, events and more.

WOMEN'S STILLS EXHIBITION

It took me a moment to

understand what was special about the exhibition of women's photographs of people held at the NFT. So often the camera creates a gulf between photographer and subject, and the pictures may be dramatic or technically brilliant but they remain illustrations which need a text. All of the women photographers in this exhibition are directly involved with their subjects and it shows.

Angela Philips describes how joining the Women's Liberation Movement cured her disillusionment with photography: "I had found a subject, a reason to take photographs again, not empty landscapes or simpering models but real people taken for a real purpose to record the progress of, and the people in, the movement." She is so involved with her subject matter that she sees her portraits as not so much observations of other people's lives but "more like visual extensions of conversations with women I have met over the last few years."

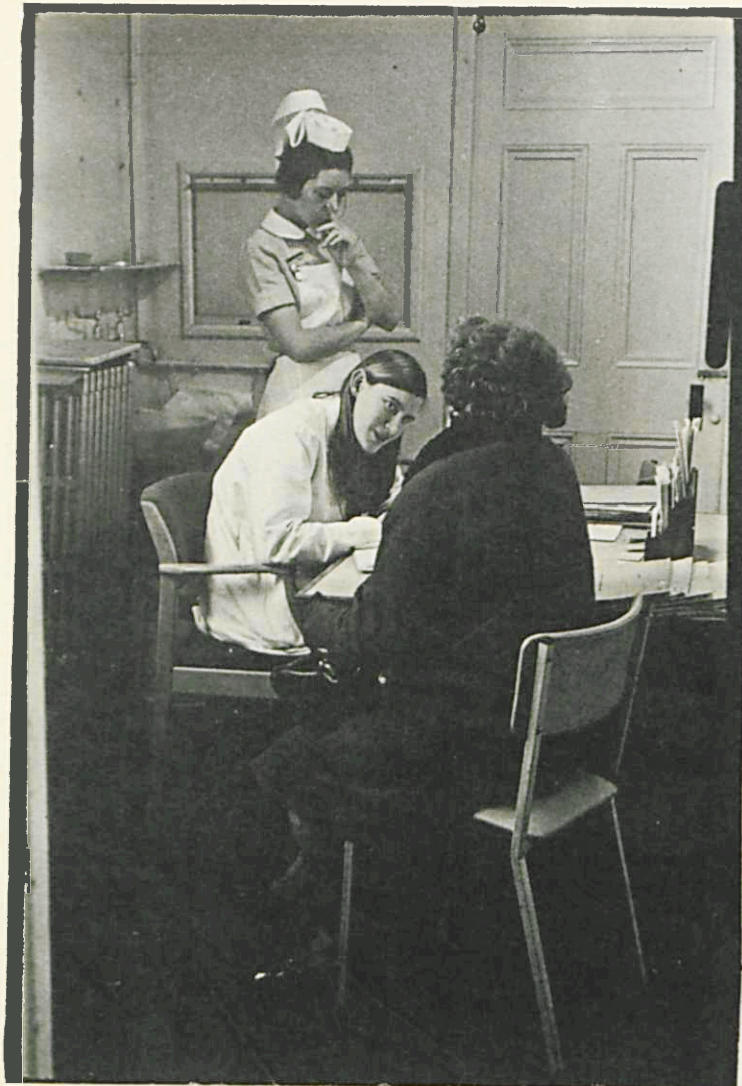


Angela Philips Demonstration Notting Hill Gate

Nancy Hillebrand's solitary figures have the same super real quality as Diane Arbus' people and Nancy shows the same ability to pin point a universal quality without detracting from the personality of her subject.



Nancy Hillebrand Olive



At the moment Claire Schwob is taking photographs of women working. She says, "I want to take photos of women showing that they are human beings in the full sense of the word." Her photograph of the doctor at Hammersmith hospital speaks for itself.

Tricia Widdison objects to photographs which treat people as symbols of social conditions. Instead she brings out their individuality and their personal interaction with their environment. This is well illustrated by the various states of attention amongst the girls in the Geography class. You can see Tricia's photographs at the Half Moon Gallery, 27 Alie Street, London E1 (Aldgate East/Aldgate tubes) May 31st - June 24th.

Ann Christine Eek, the Swedish participant in the show exhibited pictures from the photographic documentation on women in Sweden which she is putting together with a grant from the Swedish government.

Claire Schwob Hammersmith Hospital



Tricia Widdison Pupils at Blackburne House, Liverpool

SISTERSHOW

A theatre group from Bristol Women's Liberation

Produced by Helen Taylor at the Bristol Polytechnic Faculty of Art and Design. Here she tells how they staged their own show.

"Sistershow was advertised as a feminist extravaganza, the first feminist show ever to be seen in Bristol produced, written and acted by women. The show was an ambitious multi-dimensional affair, with dance, song, drama, tape/slides and paintings. On both performance nights, we lined the hall with a book stall of feminist literature, an abortion and contraception display (plus pregnancy-testing kit), and a bizarre exhibition of Victorian and nouveau pictures, books and posters concerning woman's role. The walls were adorned with collages of advertisements and magazine cuttings aimed at, and degrading to, women as well as a washing line laden with nappies. It was clearly more than a show, we were bombarding our audiences with a slice of women's lives, women's thoughts, women's frustration and impatience with our lot.

One thousand people turned up to see us although 500 had to be turned away because of fire regulations, but at least they came. The programme consisted of original material (bar a few songs). It began with a sketch parodying women's role in marriage (Holy Padlock), using a show dummy as the bride. It

proceeded with lots of poetry - how great to see so many different kinds of women poets get a chance to read - including 'bored housewife' numbers, a mock-conservative lady reciting in best elocutionary style 'Oh I would like to be molested tonight', and mythological 'woman as goddess' poems from Beverly Skinner who howled and screeched at a nervous audience.

We had two excellent blues singers, one of whom, Tramp, did some Joplinesque beer-spitting and orgasmic screaming which brought the house down. A 9-year-old boy, dressed as Shirley Temple, mimed to 'Animal Crackers', a black drag queen won our Miss Women's Liberation contest and ten of us closed the show singing a Liberation song dressed in a huge 10-headed T-shirt.

It was a success, no doubt about it. We could have run for a week to packed houses. But it was our first endeavour and we'd no idea how much curiosity and interest we'd arouse. Bristol Polytechnic paid and sponsored us, so a lot of the cash and facilities problems new groups usually encounter were mercifully spared us by the Polytech's generosity. It would be harder going a second time.

So what sorts of problems did we encounter? The first is tiresome but inevitable: women have never done stage lighting or operated complex sound equipment. I regret that no one seized the opportunity to learn this time, sadly it got left to men. We may not want to, but

we will have to master technology before we can really claim the freedoms men have.

A final problem is the question of the strict disciplines involved in a show like this. Few women have been offered or have taken up positions of great responsibility, and when they have to organise something with no men around to see to the details, I feel they are reluctant to take initiatives, accept responsibilities and be generous to those women who are assuming overall control. We obviously need a lot more practice in co-operative efforts.

Still, Sistershow was, despite it all, the talk of the town. For one main reason, as I see it. We did manage to convey, fairly forcibly, a sense of the joy and excitement of women being together, which is something most people outside the Women's Movement have seen little of. That all-together feeling women have found on marches, at national conferences and at small groups, was given powerful on expression on that stage to over 500 people."

"THEMROC"

For a film that gives the game away over the male versus female ideas about liberation, see Themroc at the Classic, Piccadilly from beginning of May. Brought to England by The Other Cinema, Themroc is directed by Claude Faraldo starring Michel Piccoli as the

worker who takes to anarchy, revolting against the domination of his daily routine, home and job. His mother suffers in hiccupping silence while he acts out his fantasies, including making love to his sister and inspiring neighbours (including stereotyped domineering wife) to tear down the walls of their flats. Themroc is often very funny, probably most of us enjoy watching scenes fulfilling revolutionary day dreams, but its fatal flaw for women is seeing the same old hairy-chested male sex god who is supposedly going to liberate us all while, in fact, only using women to satisfy himself. Themroc's made up language (mostly growls and shouts), a boon for anyone irritated by sub-titles, seemed to sneak into the audience's unconscious as their laughter sounded increasingly like the noises from the film.

"SISTERHOOD IS CAPABLE"

Judy Barrington, Lillian Mohin and Zena Cook are compiling a comprehensive register of women who have any skill from dog walking to electrical wiring or translating. They are setting up a women's work force and calling the organization "Sisterhood is Capable". If you would like to join the project phone 01-730 2455.

Better Books
admission free

Voices from Women's Liberation 70p
Red Emma

Selected writings by Emma Goldman £1.00

The Dialectic of Sex Shulamith Firestone hardback £2.50
paperback 50p

Psychiatry and the Homosexual 15p

Mrs. Stalloway's Party Virginia Woolf £1.25p

Out Of My Time Narya Manners £2.80

Better Books is expanding to new premises at 148 Charing Cross Road. (Last shop on Charing Cross Road before Tottenham Court Road tube station)

Better Books will still also be at 136, Charing Cross Road. Tel.No. 836-1885.



The Sistershow

THE DENTAL SERVICES WE WANT

The Socialist Medical Association are holding a meeting on the Dental Services. Speakers will be Kathleen Mody and Sean Creighton. There will be an hours discussion with Renee Short and Par Ward Booth summing up.

House of Commons

Tuesday June 12th 7pm

Admission Free

All welcome

STOP PRESS.

"WATCH THE WOMAN"

The Common Stock Theatre Company, a young community theatre based in St. James Church Islington, has just unveiled their production "Watch The Woman" compiled and arranged by Chattie Salaman. The sketches and songs create a brilliant portrayal of women's role; how it came about and what we must do to change it. It is often moving, always witty and immensely perceptive. The accuracy with which they state the woman's case is the result of the months the company have spent talking and working with women from the Packerham Estate Islington and with women in Holloway prison. The company improvised situations, the women told them what it was really like, and together they evolved "Watch The Woman".

The message is clear and is assimilated into a fast, funny production that is very, very entertaining.

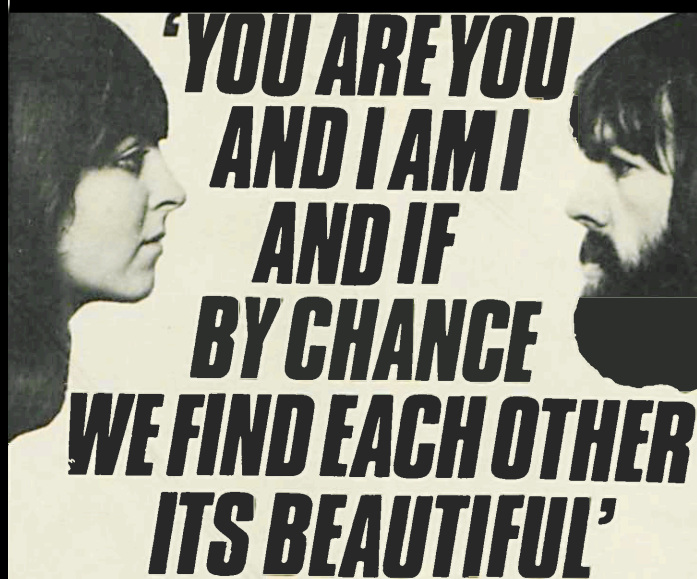
The production is designed for touring (min space 20' by 20') and will tour the greater London area May through July. If you have a community hall or similar space you could give your friends a treat by contacting The Common Stock Theatre Company, 6 Wendover Court, Chiltern Street, London W1. Everyone should see the show, "Watch the woman, something's going to happen."

WOMAN IN ART HISTORY

The article we called "Old Mistresses" in the April issue was originally written by Therese Schwartz for the "Feminist Art Journal" Rosie Parker condensed her information as "Spare Rib" is not a specialist Art publication and we erroneously attributed the research to Rosie Parker. "Spare Rib" offers Therese Schwartz their sincerest apologies for the confusion and misunderstanding arising out of our presentation of her material. We particularly regret our error as we know how much work Therese Schwartz has put into her research.

WAITRESS DU JOUR

page 8 this issue, was written by Joyce Betries for *Up from Under*, 339 Lafayette St, New York, N.Y. 10012. Subscriptions \$3.00 for 5 issues.



FOUR NEW PELICANS ON WEST-COAST PSYCHOLOGY

Encounter Groups

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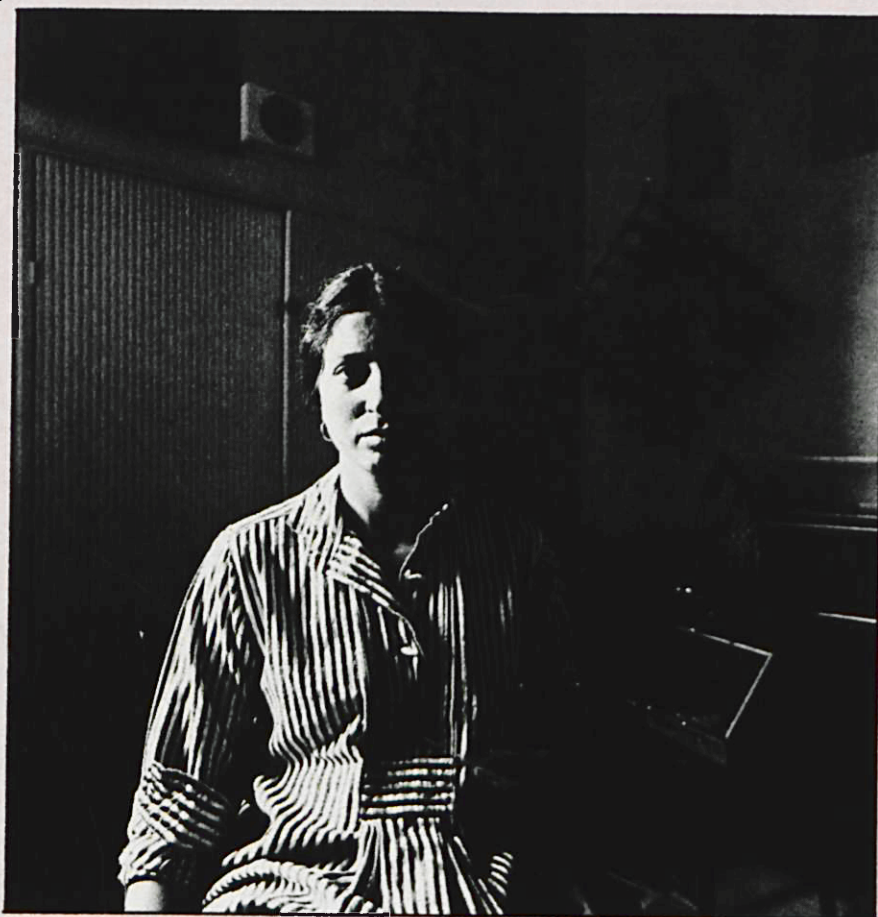
William C. Schutz 40p

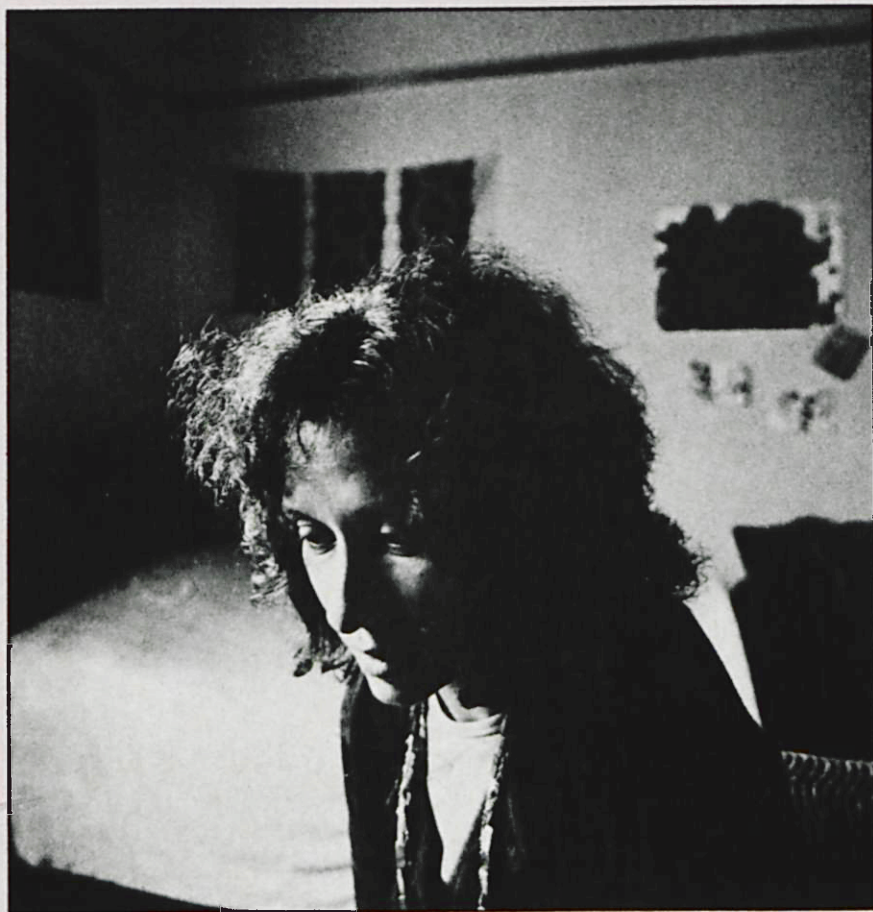


For further details on these four titles write for a special leaflet to:
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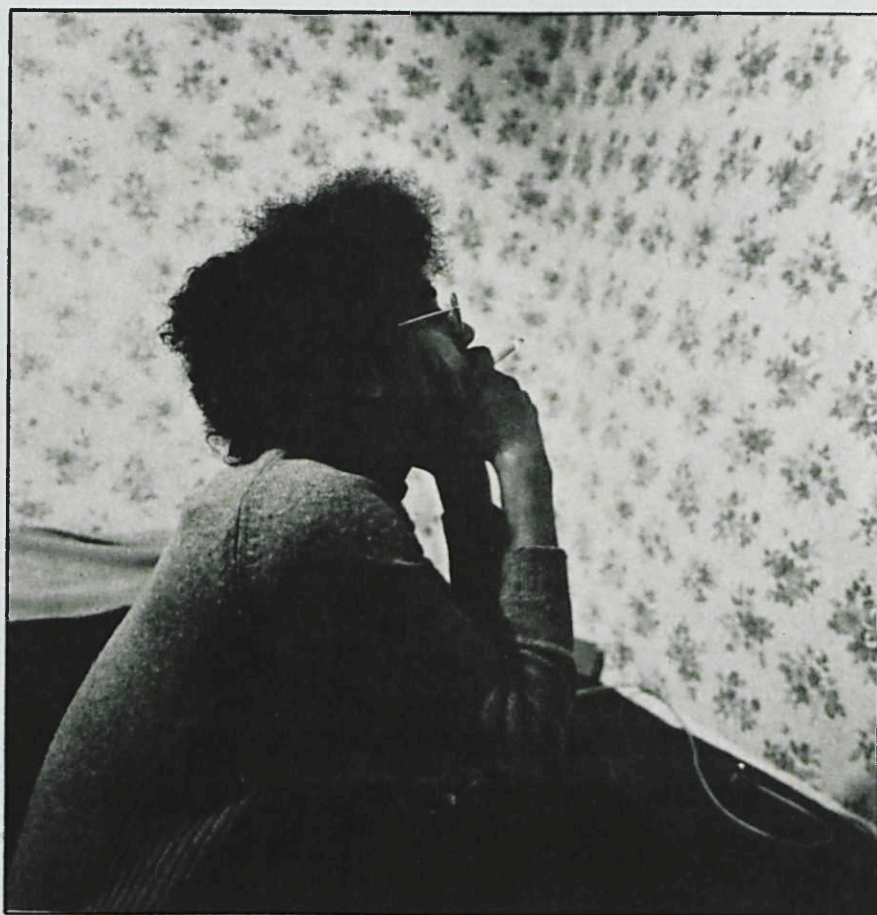


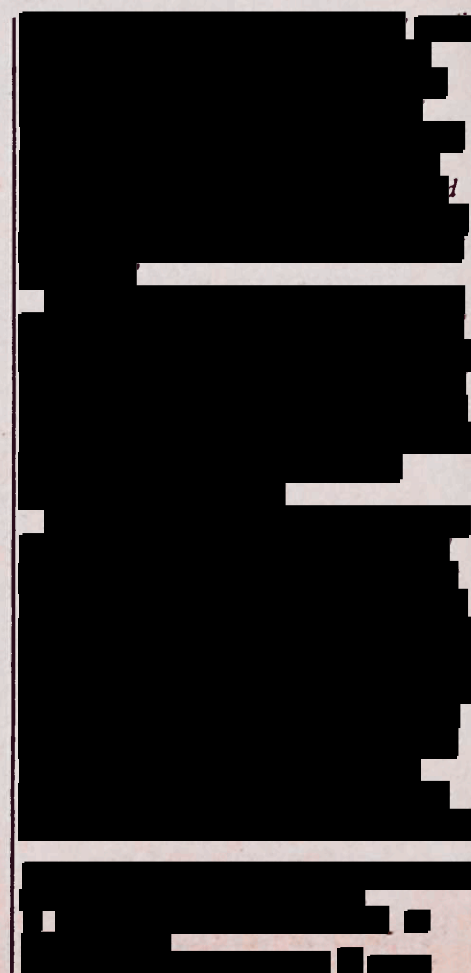
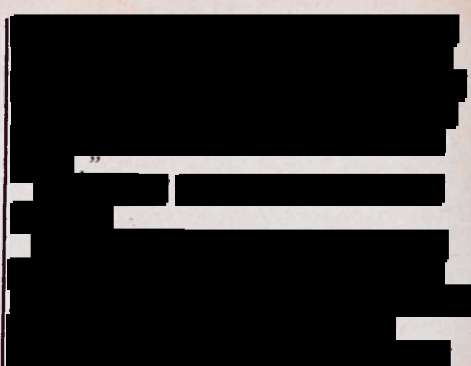
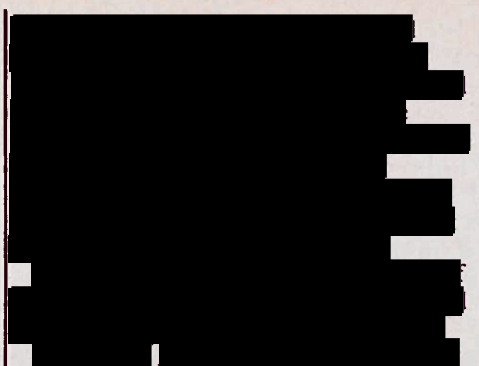
photographs by Nancy Hillebrand











LETTERS.

Dear Spare Rib,

It was brave of Susana Allen to bare her soul (or her sexuality) in the way she did in April but I can't agree with it all. She seems to have fallen into the trap of stereotyping — not only herself — but homosexuals and bisexuals too.

Far from allaying the myths, she reinforces the one which assumes that bisexuals and homosexuals are so randy 'they hardly surface to eat'. The impression Susana gives is that she's obviously so rampant sexually that anyone in her path would offer a possible lay.

It's her introductory paragraph I most take exception to. Thousands of marriages may turn out to be totally sexless, but, with few exceptions, not many still start off that way. Susana says the homosexual relationship is less likely to be a purely sexual one, more likely to have a deeper level of true understanding etc., True in Utopia. Doesn't she only mean that two people of the same sex can instinctively understand one another better? But worst of all is her implicit belief that lesbians are lesbians by default in other words because they can't get a man, which seems to be a very unliberated attitude to take, and merely reinforces the whole idea of male dominance and prejudice, of which I think Susana is utterly unaware.

Susana herself has had powerful homosexual fantasies, yet is afraid to be defined within those terms; hence her angle on homosexuals? Besides which, in generalising what she says can only possibly be applied to women and not all homosexuals. Does she invariably enjoy making love with men? Does she always initiate the sex act? I think what she's afraid of admitting is that she's in fact predominantly homosexual. Let's face it, it's far easier for a woman to let a man make love to her, penetrate her, than it would be for most homosexual men to penetrate a woman, which means that any reasonably sexually attractive woman could say "I'm bisexual" meaning "I can still sleep with men, which proves I'm not homosexual" when in fact she was.

What makes me think Susana's sexually confused is the sensual way in which she sees people. It's precisely the one in which women accuse men of regarding them, not in emotional terms, as people, but only in terms of possible sensual experiences — as sex objects. If she settled down for any length of time with a woman, I feel sure her urge to sleep with almost anyone would subside.

As it is she's not having the best of both worlds but the worst. How can she relate? Precisely, as she says, sex isn't everything, and it's a pity it dominates her article so.

Bisexuality attracts hostility, from which I've suffered too. I don't feel hostile to Susana for 'swinging' if that's her bag, only slightly critical of her wellmeaning assumptions for the rest of us homophiles.

Virginia Sturges
20 Elms Crescent Clapham SW4 8RA

Dear Spare Rib,

I agree with Susana Allen in so far as many of us are bisexual. But I feel she is advocating too strongly, or assuming that all

women are in need of a bisexual sex life. She is also taking a chauvinistic attitude to her own sex in assuming other women are there to provide the sexual satisfaction men fail to give her.

She seems immature emotionally and unable to sustain any relationship for more than a few years.

She is lucky to have found female bed mates who agree to "one-night stands".

I was married for eight years. I left my husband, had a lesbian relationship and realized that sexually I no longer need men, but I do prefer a secure relationship and would not be willing as a divorced woman to be on call for Susana and her followers to practice their bisexuality on. I'd go so far as to say Susana Allen's whole article stinks of an egotistical search for sexual satisfaction.

Aren't we all trying through Women's Lib to prove we are not just sexual objects?

Yours sincerely,

V.C.

SW5

Dear Spare Rib,

I think it's great that abortions are now legal and safe. When I was a student in France, a generation ago, I had an illegal, unsafe abortion. Like so many women of my generation, I suffered all the guilt feelings and anxiety that went with it.

At least I was liberated enough to know that I didn't wish to marry the father of the foetus, and wasn't ready to settle down. I even offered to give the baby to his family and then set off travelling, after I had appealed in vain to doctors I knew. Little did I realise, at that time, the trauma for the child and myself that such a solution would have meant. Luckily, I was helped by brave friends, who also risked imprisonment, as did the mid-wife I had to visit twice, and I escaped physically uninjured.

One of the first things I told the man I later married, whom I met a year after the abortion, was "I've had an abortion". Such was the sense of guilt I felt.

Thank goodness women today have better ways of coping with unwanted pregnancy.

from A Middle-Aged Woman

Dear Ribs,

Your correspondent M. Townsend (= Martin, Mrs. Ms?) says, Re your article, Put a Her in your Hertz. I should like to tell you that the laugh is on Hertz'.

It ain't.

I missed the article, so I don't know whether 'Put the Her in Hertz' is their agencies' brilliant advertising slogan or your own half-brilliant headline. But the laugh is decidedly on M. Townsend.

Think of Austin, whom he/she refused to patronise because 'they advertised a car even the wife should drive'. He/she will admit, I think, that cars, even Austins, are designed by designers, constructed by engineers, built by sheet-metal workers and fitters and ashtray artisans and then, and only then, delivered to the manicured hands of the marketing manager, his agency, and the salesmen. The skills of the carmen are quite

separate from the emotions or chauvinism of the admen.

For two years, I worked as a marketing manager in Levers. The advertising claims of Persil, Omo, etc. and of the main rivals, Fairy Snow and Daz, were quite separate from the products' actual contents and performances.

Next time M. Townsend buys a car he/she should measure the engineers' skills not the admen's patter. To refuse to buy an Austin because a silly copywriter generated the slogan, 'Even the wife could drive' is as irrational and silly as refusing to buy the Evening Standard because a decrepit news vendor, in bawling its sensational contents, happens to spit on the pavement.

Best wishes

John Howkins

9e Transept Street, NW1

Dear Spare Rib,

Your article, quote Ravel alias Grovel in the April edition of Spare Rib, came as no surprise to me. I went through a similar experience with Ravels in Birmingham, although I was not aware of the magazine writer dodge as ammo.

My shoes were obviously faulty; there being a slit in the inside of the shoe. I went through the usual channels; a slanging match with the trendy, arrogant manager; numerous letters to Ravel Head Office where incidentally the shoes were sent for inspection, and explained that he in all his ignorance had bought the shoes for his wife but they were too small.

Immediately replacement shoes were found a half size bigger. As the size difference did not make any significant change in the comfort of the shoes I had at last by hook or crook acquired a pair of intact shoes.

Needless to say I have never bought Ravel shoes again.

Yours faithfully,

Christina McKenzie

Flat 11, Gynsill Court Flats, Gynsill Lane, Anstey, Leicester LE7 7AH.

Dear Spare Rib,

Referring to the article "Needles in the National Health" by Carol Dix in April's issue, I would like to make it clear that laboratory assistants or technicians are not included under the title of "hospital ancillary workers". They are not connected in any way with the present strikes, and are not connected either with porters, cleaning staff, etc. They are certainly not non-professionals as the article states, having to study for six years before achieving a qualification which is at least equal to degree level. They are as professional as the medical staff and equally as important.

I hope I have cleared up a misunderstanding as many members of the public think they are out on strike with the laundry workers, cooks etc, may I stress again that they are nearer to the category of the medical staff than the cleaner.

Thanks for giving me the opportunity of explaining this.

Yours sincerely J.A. Sankey 188 Ayres Road Manchester 16



BOOK REVIEWS

**Lesley Thornton:
The Gentle Tamers
Dee Brown
Barrie & Jenkins
£3.20**

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee (1970) made Dee Brown as the historian of the Wild West. *The Gentle Tamers*, however, first appeared in 1958 and the suspicion that an early effort has been resurrected to make the most of his current (and well-deserved) popularity is not laid to rest by reading this collection of anecdotes about women in the West. If you are looking for serious analysis, sociological or psychological, forget it. If you feel like a giggle, dip into it.

Brown conveys a nightmare vision of the creeping feminisation of a primitively virtuous male society.

He depicts the early Western male, sex-starved, outnumbered 10 to 1 (oh girl!), rushing to destruction. His 'lusty frontier hegemony' abandoned, he jumped lemminglike at the chance of having a woman; 'that sweet, anarchic male society enjoyed by frontiersmen' was doomed.

Women set out on the manhunt with equal alacrity — out West men and fortunes could be made (usually simultaneously). As Brown remarks, 'To be treated like white goddesses was a new experience': here the pedestal on which Victorian man planted 'Woman' was for real. 'Woman', free to do her own thing, followed her natural (or, as the author clearly feels, unnatural) bent to the hilt, pommel, gun-butt and other unfeminine extremities.

Very naughty ladies like Velvet Ass Rose and Cottontail ('who was of course a natural blonde' comments Brown, somewhat uncharacteristically) made very, very large fortunes. An outstanding 'lady of easy virtue' was the magnetically attractive professional gambler Kitty Le Roy, who had 'five husbands, seven revolvers, a dozen bowie-knives... She married her first husband because he was the only man of all her lovers who had the nerve to let her shoot an apple off his head while she rode by at full speed.' Her career came to an appropriate end when her fifth husband beat her to the draw. Rather more moral ladies hit the trail thinly disguised as schoolteachers.

But most women probably went West with their men. Their sufferings were incredible, their endurance remarkable. Here they earned the respect they were ostensibly given elsewhere and Dee Brown tells it like it

was — for *Woman's Own*, rather too much of the time. There are dozens of recipes and do-it-yourself instructions: how to brew coffee from dandelion roots, make rouge from beet juice, build sod houses, devise washing facilities in a tent, or weight the hem of a hoop skirt in a Kansas gale (as an observer remarked in 1853, 'Bloomerism has done wonders for Oregon'). A favourite form of light relief was the 'hug social'. 'It costs ten cents to hug any one between fifteen and twenty, five cents from twenty to thirty, one dollar to hug another man's wife, old maids two for a nickel, while female lecturers are free with a chromo thrown in.' Outdoor prayer meetings were also popular — as the saying went, 'more souls were begotten than saved'.

Dee Brown's last chapters describe the final collapse — the spectre of female rebellion raised its ugly head, embodied in monstrosities like the 'bandit queens and petticoat terrors' of the Civil War. At one time, no jury would convict a woman, even for murder, and one enterprising lady called Fair (yes, really) took full advantage of this, leaving 'a trail of dead and live husbands behind her'. Women actually expected husbands to satisfy them; divorce was cheap, easy and usually applied for by the wife. Not content to confine themselves to the usual Victorian careers of wife, teacher, actress, or madam, they were running businesses, factories, farms, they were ploughing, building, horse-breaking. And the deluded cowboys of Wyoming were the first men in the world to give them the vote, in 1869.

Brown relives male fears of redundancy — the unemployment (let alone death) rate among husbands and boyfriends was high. He trembles with the virile cowboys who saw their act being taken over by the gunslinging, cigar-smoking women who swagger through his pages, and he mourns for the passing of that male Paradise, the boyhood of America, the greatest American dream. Women actually tried to fight poverty, physical hardship and danger, and 'to destroy these traditional testers of human endurance was to destroy something male in the race'. The descendants of miner, cowboy and Indian fighter were 'reduced to a routine of freeway commuting, do-it-yourself gadgetry, tract-development living, dishwashing, baby-sitting, neighborhood committee meetings, and television viewings... As Mother used to say: 'It's time you boys grew up and stopped playing at cowboys and Indians.'

**Micheline Wandor:
The House That Jack Built
Poems for Shelter
edited by Brian Patten
and Pat Krett
George Allen & Unwin
hardback £2.50, paperback 85p**

This book slides past the problem of how to assess poetry by giving us a clear guide: its purpose is to raise money for Shelter, the National Campaign for the Homeless. A number of poems were specially commissioned, others found and collected by Brian Patten, one of the co-editors. The book's royalties go to Shelter, and presumably (because of the price of both paper- and hardback) it intends to bring the plight of the homeless to the attention of those in more fortunate circumstances, who might be so moved as to lurch out of the comfort and security for long enough to spare a thought and some cash for those less fortunate.

For that purpose, certain emotions are evoked again and again. A lot of the poems in the book (eg, Ivor Cutler, Harold Massingham) evoke the appalling conditions in which the homeless live, and their consequent ill-health, misery, apathy and dereliction — compassion and horror are simultaneously called for. In others, these emotions are taken further, put into a perspective of a society where affluence flourishes.

In other words, some (though perhaps not enough?) move towards a kind of analysis in poetic form: Adrian Mitchell's *Many many mansions* tackles the waste of money on new churches; Brecht's *A worker reads and asks these questions*; John Brunner's *Fit for Human Consumption*; Tom Pickard's *Hunga*; Alan Bold's *Life*

Class is a fine bitter take-off of callous sociologese that treats people as specimens.

As an anthology the book is thus remarkably coherent; but it also raises questions about its limitations and gaps. There are no poems by members of the homeless families. No poems by people, or about people, tackling the problems themselves — squatters, rent strikers; no political action between these covers to begin to match with the political problem. And while I don't in any way criticise the editors for sticking to what are evidently self-defined limits, it does make me wonder whether it is the scope of poetry itself which is limited, or whether it is simply our use of it, in an isolated way, away from 'prose', away from 'political' treatments of the housing situation, away from analysis. I also wonder whether the publishers are giving the homeless any free copies?

THWARTED
by Alan Jackson

I live forlorn on the seventh floor
of a corporation flat
which the children have all fell from
and the pigeons have beshat

I do not mind the loneliness
the long evenings with the telly
but I do wish the wind hadn't altered
the flight
of the brick I dropped on Jock Kelly

**Arabella Kurtz
Megs Eggs
Heinemann 95p**

I think the story is nice but a bit babyish. I can read it by myself especially the things Meg says. I liked the part when the eggs cracked best and also the part when she was sweating. My little sister liked the part when they wanted supper and went up the stairs to bed. Meg isn't frightening like other witches.



Stephanie Gilbert
Reader's Digest Repair
Manual. The complete
guide to home
maintenance. Price 6gns,
or direct from the
publishers on approval at
£5.00 plus p&p. Readers
Digest Association, 7-10
Old Bailey, London
EC99.

When this book was published last year, it just slipped silently on to the book shelves with little or no flurry of publicity. Since then, it has been slowly gaining the stature of a bible amongst the connoisseurs of repair manuals. If you ask these determined do-it-yourselfers about the book they just nod wisely, loath to rave about it - as that would infer that they didn't know it all already, and yet unable to find anything to criticize.

It is the most comprehensive and beautifully produced manual yet to appear on the market. There were over 160 contributors - large companies and Local Authorities. Over 30 groups of designers worked on it producing diagrams where even the most complex - 'overhauling a fixed jet carburettor', or 'the basic parts of a fan heater', appear simple and easy to understand. It has seven parts, ranging from damp-proof courses, to mending your electric kettle, to the kiss of life emergency repairs section.

The Reference section, which comes at the end, is the backbone of the whole manual, and worth reading first. *Buyers' Rights* tells you about the use and abuse of guarantees, hire purchase transactions, when to return goods and when to repair yourself. The *Public Services* section will in many cases save you time and money by getting the job done free, or by helping you acquire a grant. There's a section on ladders and scaffolding, and what to look out for when buying wood. As timber has increased in price by nearly 40% since last summer, it is essential to be able to check the quality yourself. There are four pages on adhesives with charts that help you to recognize your material, (in the case of plastics, acrylics etc) and the brand names of all the different adhesives suitable for your job.

You are taken through your house, alphabetically, by means of intricate, yet readable diagrams and explanations. Central heating systems are laid out with ideal temperatures suggested, your rights vis a vis the oil contractors, and how to adjust and maintain them. Each small section, whether on roofing, wallpapering or changing a tap washer, first gives you general advice and information on the job at hand, then a very useful list of materials and tools that you will need. For example, "Mending a rattling

door". Materials: Two wooden plugs, wood filler, matching paint. Tools: Screwdriver, mallet, chisel, pencil, rule, paintbrush. The job is then illustrated in simple stages with small notes where necessary. In the decorating section, a summary of painting techniques gives you sufficient information to cope with any surface from new brick work to rusty window frames.

Renovating and Restoring:

A bit out of keeping with the rest of the book, including flash photographs of antique furniture, brass or jewellery, and without many of the simple diagrams. However there are plenty of good tips on removing stains, polishing and mending broken items. There is a tendency to tell you to 'seek expert advice' where your piece is a valuable antique, but there are times when the enthusiastic and careful amateur will do a better job than the overworked and blasé 'expert'.

Around the Home:

The largest section and returns to the layout of the first part. It is invaluable even if you aren't a natural 'do-it-yourself' person as sooner or later you are going to want to mend that hole in the carpet, repair your cigarette lighter/alarm-clock or slide projector. You can find out how to maintain your aquarium, repair the venetian blinds, your tent, make the carpet sweeper work at last, and even, if you should be so bold, take your violin or guitar apart and put it back together again. There is a section on maintaining tools, sharpening chisels etc, that ought to have come at the beginning of the book.

In the Garden:

Nothing unfortunately on 'repairing' ailing plants, except tidying up your lawn and pruning trees. It covers repair and maintenance of your machinery - 43 pages on lawn mowers - how to lay a path, put up a fence, mend deck chairs, repair your spade handles, and leaves you messing about at the bottom of your swimming pool...

Electrical equipment:

The one section that has been criticised for continually telling you to

seek expert advice. However it is still amazingly comprehensive and will save you a lot of money in simple jobs like replacing the element in an electric kettle, repairing your iron, shaver, record player etc. Obviously Readers Digest have to be over cautious here as amateur tampering with electrics is one of the most common causes of fires and home accidents. All warnings and possible mistakes are in heavy print and are repeated on each job. You can't learn to rewire your house but you can come to understand it and cope with faulty vacuum cleaners, spindryers, or simple TV adjustments.

In the Garage:

With 40 pages on cars you are going to be busy. Respraying, door latches, cooling systems, engines with charts on how to locate the fault, what to check, and how to repair it, squeaky wipers and even car radios and upholstery are dealt with. The rest of the section deals with all the problems that arise from bicycles, mopeds, caravans and small boats.

Admittedly 6gns is a high price to pay for any book, but if you consider what even minor repairs can cost you, especially on electrical goods, and plumbing, then you will easily save that in a few months (particularly now with VAT). Consider clubbing together with neighbours or friends and getting a joint copy or persuade your library to get one (not in the reference library section). And when you have got bored with just repairing and maintaining everything in sight, Readers Digest have also produced a 7gns Do-it-yourself loose leaf book with which you can virtually rebuild your house and everything in it.

Andrea Adam:
The Female Orgasm
Psychology physiology
Fantasy
Seymour Fisher
Allen Lane £5

Seymour Fisher, a Professor of Psychiatry at the State University of New York, is undeniably brilliant. Not as an author, but as the man who managed to say nothing about the female orgasm in 443 pages, 540 foot notes, 11 appendices and 46 pages of references. It's quite a feat but unfortunately one which inspires only cynicism. This book must be yet another case of "publish or perish"; the Damocles sword of American academia. As for the motives of the publishers they appear no more uplifting. They are too eager to get on the profitable Women's Lib. bandwagon. All of this could be forgiven if

the "Female Orgasm" wasn't so unutterably boring; and silly. After all the subject is not without interest or pertinence. But that seems to have escaped Prof. Fisher.

In his chapter on Sexual Responsiveness and Determinants of Orgasm Capacity the author laboriously finds that age, religion, source of sex education, hormonal indices and attributes of sex partner have no effect on orgasm capacity. However, higher education and social class indicate greater responsiveness which leads Prof. Fisher to speculate that "the masculinizing effect of education upon women might have led one to expect a quite opposite relationship."

Discussing how the feminine role is acquired, Fisher gets carried away and muddles the data for the urge to editorialize. "There is little doubt," he proclaims "that male superiority has wide currency in our culture and this may affect the girl who is trying to define herself ... (but) there are numerous ways in which femininity has positive prestige to make it an attractive model. Being a wife and a mother is paramount in self-definition for most women and constitutes a clear goal." The dreary rip-off on "Little Women" is luckily relieved by the more hilarious findings in the chapter on Orgasm Consistency and Permanence of Love Object where Prof. Fisher notes that the ability to achieve an orgasm is unrelated to how friendly or unfriendly a woman is or how much she smokes or drinks "alcoholic beverages." He even becomes adventurous suggesting that consciousness altering drugs can facilitate orgasm because it has been observed that schizophrenic and epileptic women have a high orgasm frequency. He concludes with the notion that women may possibly acquire the "skill to immerse themselves and let themselves be carried away" without fear of loss of the love object.

In a lengthy dissertation on that fashionable subject, of clitoral vs. vaginal preferences he offers the revelations that those who prefer vaginal stimulation have a greater level of anxiety whereas the clitoral woman experiences a greater degree of ecstasy. He boldly contradicts Freud and claims that women who prefer clitoral to vaginal stimulation are more mature and have a more advanced sense of their own bodies. Masturbation is indulged in by women who are "messy." Those who are neat and tidy would find it "unclean." And little girls who were neglected by their mothers are more likely to masturbate as are those who are sensitive to being "tickled on the wrist." The author is no more enlightening nor less tendentious writing about homosexuality. He finds that lesbians have a greater orgasm frequency than a heterosexual couple after five years of marriage; but, "it's unlikely that either masturbation or homosexual stimulation provide unique, positive feelings and satisfaction." And so it goes.

Prof. Fisher has analyzed the findings of all major scientific studies to date and tried to isolate how sociological, physiological and psychological factors affect the female's orgasmic capacity and modes of responsiveness. He has cross-referred, double-checked, correlated and compared and ultimately only managed to discover that none of the factors used have any bearings on the female orgasm. And unwittingly he concludes that all work done, his own included, is irrelevant. Now that's pretty cheeky at a cool five pounds. Still, maybe one should be grateful to Prof. Fisher for so bluntly showing that the questions and interview techniques used presently for investigating female behaviour need radical change.



FILMS

The London Women's Film Group,
7-9 Earlham Street,
London WC2.

"Anti-Phallocratic Cinema?"

"... Miss Kaplan is a tall and spectacular blond who radiates glamour..." That's how the British Film Institute billed Nelly Kaplan in their news bulletin before the recent National Film Theatre season of women's films. If this quotation is representative of BFI thinking, then Claire Johnston's achievement in getting the season together is a remarkable feat, for Nelly Kaplan is in fact a French film-maker and a proponent of "anti-phallocratic" cinema.

The women's Cinema season included fifty feature films and numerous shorts, from a wide variety of countries and dating as far back as 1922. At the beginning the NFT management had its doubts about the marketability of the women's season; they were totally unprepared for the crowds of women who packed the theatre and, in desperation, barged their way in with placards when the 'House Full' sign went up.

In the history of the cinema, women directors form a small minority. This season has provided an opportunity to gather some of the films together and to discuss whether a women's cinema does exist. Practically all of the films had a clearly female, although not necessarily feminist, perspective. For instance, Barbara Loden's film *Wanda* (USA 1970), sensitively portrays a solitary woman's passivity and dog-like dependence. But *Wanda* shows no indication of ever asserting herself or gaining control over her own destiny. In contrast, *For Women - First Chapter*, by Christina Perincioli (Germany 1971) is a clearly feminist film. It shows how four women shop-assistants discover that through collective action they can find the strength to state their demands for higher wages. Its mixture of fiction and documentary techniques effectively combined humour with a political analysis.

Nelly Kaplan's work in the feature industry is extremely important to women. Her first feature 'La Fiancée du Pirate' (France 1969) tells the story of a girl totally ostracised by the small French village in which she lives. She takes all she has - her sex - and uses this to completely upset the power and economic relationships in the village. She sets up as village whore and by sexually exploiting the men consciously wreaks her revenge and discovers her own strength. At the end of the film she takes her money, leaves all the consumer goods she has

acquired and walks away free. The heroine is a modern witch - at one time she would have been burnt but here she burns the others. Also important is that Marie is a prostitute who does not have to feel guilty or repentant. Many women when discussing this film made the point that they found her victory tremendously satisfying. The film certainly works on the level of releasing women's fantasies. In discussion Nelly Kaplan stressed the necessity of revenge to purge pent-up anger and actually said that "revenge is good for the skin"! Her second feature, "Papa les Petits Bateaux" (France 1971), is a comic strip about a blonde blue-eyed Shirley Temple/Mae West character who systematically destroys a band of gangsters who kidnap her with the aim of extracting ransom money from her rich father.

The scope of the season was vast and seemed to include every possible kind of film. There was a subversive 'sexploitation' movie called 'Student Nurses' by Stephanie Rothman, (USA 1970) and avant-garde pictures like 'Meshes of the Afternoon' made by Maya Deren and Alexander Hammid (USA 1943) and 'Jemima Fille des Montagnes', by Anielle Weinberger and Ginette Gablot (France 1972). Although there was practically every variety of style we are still looking forward to the first feminist Western.

Lastly an important feature of the festival was an open screening for women only at which any woman could show her work in the context of a sympathetic audience. Discussed at this was the question of discrimination against women in the film industry. During that afternoon several women fresh from the film union annual conference brought the news that the ACTT had voted to join the fight for equal opportunity in the industry. This is a significant step forward for women who want to work in films. For those who are thinking of applying for jobs the union's address is Bill Borrowes

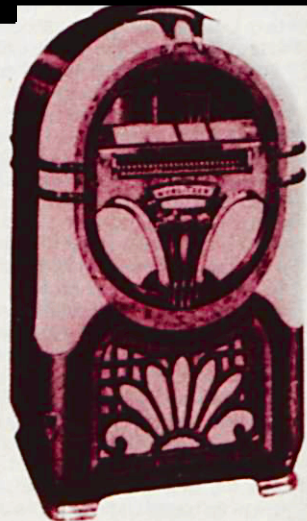
ACTT
2 Soho Square
London W1

(Write to him until they appoint the woman officer voted in one of the conference motions.)

PEOPLE



Nelly Kaplan:
photo Francine Winham



RECORDS

Marion Fudger:

David Bowie 'Alladin Sane' RCA Victor

Bowie's back in full farce with an L.P. of nine driving numbers, all self-penned except 'Let's Spend the Night Together'. On the whole I've never approved of "cover versions", particularly of the Stones and on hearing this effort, I still don't, but the rest of the album more than makes up for it. If you have a radio you're bound to know 'Drive in Saturday' a successful single, also 'The Jean Jeanie'. We hear strains of Linda Lewis (appearing by kind permission of), additional musicians and excellent production, best played loud (neighbours permitting). The lyrics often demand an English/Bowie, Bowie/English dictionary, but when understandable they echo despair and frightening reality, a Bowie-eye view of America, yet just as you sink into thinking there's now't but trouble ahead for us all, you're rocked up on top of the world again, boogying and bopping with the best of 'em. The beautifully bizarre cover deserves a mention, but the junk that it's filled with, other than the record, - Join his fan club for 55p plus details about yourself down to the colour of your knickers - leaves a bad taste in the mouth. But if Bowie survives it will certainly be despite his publicity not because of it.

continued on page 39

The GP, both during and after his training, derives the bulk of his theory from the pronouncements of the hospital specialists. And errors from the top of the hierarchy are often propagated down to the lower levels of the pyramid.

Such is the case in the understanding and treatment of that group of conditions lumped together under the all-embracing term "female complaints". They have, it seems, acquired a medical mythology all of their own.

Period pains, for example, are dependant on the occurrence of ovulation. Nobody knows how, and nobody knows why — but if a woman's ovaries stop producing eggs, her period pains almost invariably cease.

There is, let's be clear, absolutely nothing new about this fact. It *doesn't* represent a new insight into reproductive biology. In fact, knowledge that the existence of the one depends on the occurrence of the other dates back to 1940.

But ... 30 years on, the standard gynaecological textbooks are still describing period pains as psychogenic disorders brought on by curiously ill-defined states of mind such as "failure to adapt to the feminine role".

Why?

Jean and John Lennane are hospital doctors at, respectively, St. Bernard's, Southall and St. Mary's, Paddington. Their curiosity aroused by the extraordinary discrepancy between the facts about female complaints and some of the comments appearing in medical literature, they decided to examine the situation more closely.

The results of their research into period pains, nausea in pregnancy and pain in labour — now published in the academically prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine* — left its readers in no doubt of the Lennanes' conclusions.

The set of beliefs revealed in textbooks were, they declared, "illogical, persistent and damaging". Despite the well-documented presence of organic factors in the origin of all three conditions, the literature on each was characterised by spurious suggestions of psychological origins and an inadequate, even derisory, approach to their management.

There is an old — and wise — medical dictum that the doctor should always treat the disease rather than its symptoms, except when the disease itself is either unknown or untreatable. In such cases, the doctor's legitimate task *does* become the provision of relief for symptoms — simply because he can do no more. However, the female complaints reviewed by Jean and John Lennane are not treated in accordance with these well-established principles. For example, period pains again.....

One particular variety — primary dysmenorrhea — forms a well-defined set of symptoms experienced by about half of all women. The pattern is a regular one, the cycle of the first two to four years of menstruation usually being pain-free. And in the unfortunate 50 per cent. who do then experience pain, the problem normally resolves itself after the birth of the first child or by the age of 25.

Oral contraceptives suppress ovulation and thereby (obviously) prevent their user from becoming pregnant. But one of the fortuitous side effects of the pill is to abolish period pains. In fact, it is sometimes prescribed for this reason. Prevent ovulation and you simultaneously do away with period pains. The mechanism may be unknown, but it seems obvious that there is a straightforward physical connection.

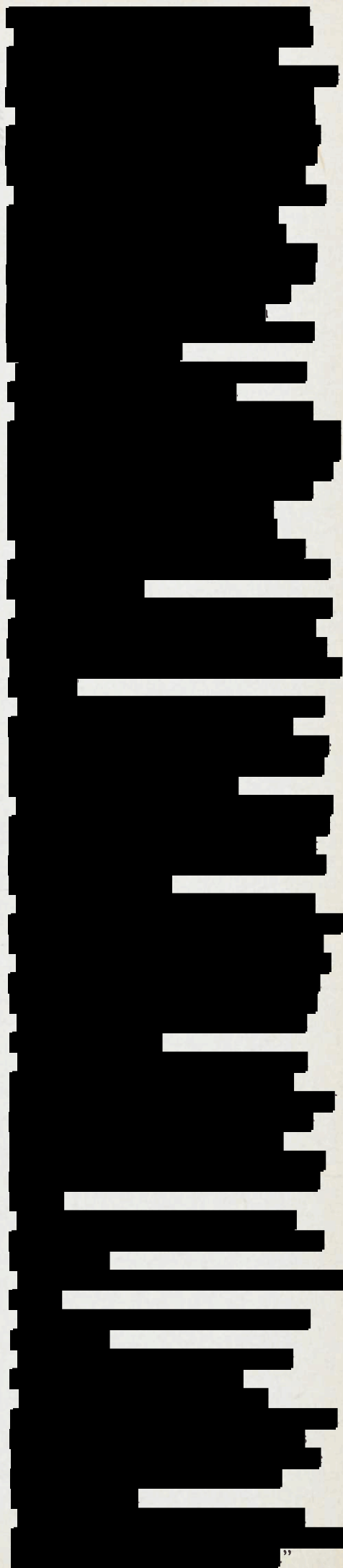
You'd never think so from reading some of the standard medical textbooks.

"Faulty outlook....leading to an exaggeration of minor discomfort....may even be an excuse to avoid doing something that is disliked", declares the author of the 1967 edition of *Principles of Gynaecology*. Period pains are "much more frequent in the 'high-strung', nervous or neurotic female than in her more stable sister," suggests another.

continued on page 39

MORE 50% of women put up with pains during
MAGNIFICENT menstruation, 88% of women are made
MEDICAL nauseous by
MYTHS pregnancy.
Your doctor is taught that the
basis of the pain is largely
neurotic. Geoff Watts looks at
this perversion of medical practice.





LETTERS.

Dear Spare Rib,
Your article on Equal Pay was interesting, but I feel that one point was not adequately covered: the attitude of women members to their unions. Until this is changed we have little hope of any real progress. From my own experience I know how difficult it is to generate interest in union matters amongst women members: they are quite happy to pay their dues and even attend the occasional lunch-time meeting, but that is as far as it goes. When it comes to giving up time out of working hours or taking positive action it's a different story. The most common reaction is "Well, I'll only be working for another couple of years, so it's not really going to affect me anyway". When you point out that they may choose to resume work after having a family, the problem is too far in the future to raise much concern.

Because women generally have been conditioned to a passive role in society they see a union as something which they pay into, and in return the union will sort out all their problems for them - and they tend to see unions as a purely male province. I recently asked a girl at work if she was going to the branch union meeting, and she replied "No, I don't think so. I mean, it's mainly the men that are going anyway, isn't it?" She was right - I was the only woman there amongst 40 or so men.

Women members who take no part in union affairs are a threat both to their unions and themselves. Solidarity is the strength of any union, and as long as women think "That's fine, but it's nothing to do with me", that strength is being sapped, and they are inviting exploitation from their employers.

Yours sincerely,
Verity Lupton
35 Woodlands Drive,
Glasgow G4 9DN.

Dear Spare Rib,

Just a note to let you know that "The Joy of Cooking" which was recently sold to a paperback company for the largest amount any book anywhere has ever gone for (\$1.5 million) was originally printed privately by the author, Mrs Irma S. Rombauer. Mrs Rombauer, a good cook, wrote it just after she became a widow, chiefly, said her daughter in a New York Times interview I just read "to distract her keen unhappiness".

Now that's 'a spirit to admire'. That was in 1930. Later it was printed by a big publisher. It has now sold six million copies.

So I'd like to repeat what I said in an earlier issue, becoming your own publisher is one way of getting a start as a writer.

Lillian Roxon

Dear Spare Rib,

As you know, V.A.T. has been levied on Tampax and other "sanitary protection". Since such articles must be considered as essentials, their inclusion in the tax is either an oversight on the part of Parliament, or a piece of discrimination. I have written to my M.P. to demand why Tampax etc. have not been zero-rated, and I think it would be a good idea if as many women as possible did the same.

Yours
Maggie Bonham
Flat 1, 4 Park Road
Bognor Regis, Sussex.

MEDICAL MYTHS..

These authors are not just referring to the effect that the personality of an individual may have on the extent of her suffering, but are implying (or directly stating) that her faulty outlook is actually causing it.

If the pain really was the result of a "faulty outlook", you'd expect it to start from the time of the first psychic shock to the patient — that is, from the first menstruation. Not two to four years later as is usually the case.

The means by which established medical opinion seems to have reached its bizarre conclusion are what the Lennanes call the reversal of a truism. "The reversal is logically unsound, but will still fit in with the observed phenomena often enough to retain an impressive ring of 'truth'. Thus the severity or duration of pain in severe dysmenorrhea would be expected to make the patients more apprehensive; this has been reversed to say that fear and dislike of menstruation cause or aggravate the dysmenorrhea."

In almost any other context, this reversal would be seen for the absurdity it is. We all have strong emotions about a visit to the dentist — usually the selfsame fear and dislike. But would anyone suggest that the pain of the drill results purely and simply from these reasonable apprehensions?

The patient suffering from some 'normal' form of pain can expect to receive rest and relief. A woman with the affront to persist in having severe period pains may be denied access to either.

'Very little can be done for the patient who prefers to use menstrual symptoms as a monthly refuge from responsibility and effort' —

A 1972 Medical Text Book.

Intriguing though this situation is, it still leaves the original question unanswered. Why should a condition which manifests itself in physical terms have come to be regarded as psychogenic in origin?

"It is of interest," the Lennanes say, "that these conditions directly affect only women, and that nearly all the textbook authors are men".

Nausea occurs in something like three quarters of all pregnant women, the estimates having ranged from 75 to 88 per cent. Typically it is worst when the woman gets up (the classic morning sickness) — but it can occur at other times of the day. It is relieved by food, seldom interferes with eating or causes more than a slight weight loss unless exceptionally severe, and may or may not be accompanied by actual vomiting.

Once again the textbooks have little doubt about its origin. Consider the view propounded by the fourth edition of *Practical Obstetrical Problems*: "The nausea of pregnancy may be classified as a neurosis and may indicate resentment, ambivalence and inadequacy in women ill-prepared for motherhood."

As three out of every four pregnant women are being so-labelled, one begins to tremble for the welfare of generations unborn. But as the Lennanes point out, "to classify up to 88 per cent, of patients with a particular organic condition (pregnancy) as neurotic is unusual in the extreme." And even that, surely, is putting it mildly.

Just what do we know about this particular form of sickness?

It begins in the fifth or sixth week after conception, usually subsides in the 14th to 16th and is often more severe in women bearing more than one child. The hormone oestrogen can exactly mimic its symptoms, and nausea is a recognised side effect of oestrogen-containing oral contraceptives. Oestrogen itself is excreted in large amounts during pregnancy.

So, the origin of the nausea? Jean and John Lennane go on to point out the logical deduction: "The exact cause remains unknown, but the nausea is probably due to some substance secreted in excess during pregnancy, and in increased amounts in multiple pregnancy....it seems likely that this substance is oestrogen." Which sounds reasonable.

Sickness sometimes starts before the woman has suspected she is pregnant. This, together with its added severity in multiple pregnancies, completely contradicts the neurosis theory — unless of course you are prepared to accept that the woman can sub-consciously self-diagnose these conditions as early as the fourth week.

Once more then, the reader of the standard text finds him- or herself confronted by the Lennanes' reverse truism. "Nausea in pregnancy, particularly if severe, may make the subject ambivalent

about the state that is causing it (or actively hostile if the pregnancy is not a welcome one) as long as the symptoms last; this is reversed to say that ambivalence of hostility causes the nausea."

Similar principles of interpretation apply to the other examples quoted by the Lennanes. Pain is an unpleasant sensation which, not unnaturally, tends to cause fear. The textbook authorities believe instead that it is fear of labour which creates the pain. An infant's prolonged bouts of unexplained screaming may cause its mother anxiety. Reversed, the infant's distress becomes a result of maternal insecurity and tension.

There is no easy solution to deep-seated prejudice — even when exposed, as by the Lennanes, from within.

This change from within may well prove to be a lengthy process. But, the next time your GP tells you (poor inadequate wretch that you are) about the psychological origin of your very real period pains, nausea or whatever, you might actually be doing him a favour by murmuring a few gentle but appropriately didactic remarks about the need for scientific objectivity!■

RECORDS..

Roxy Music - For Your Pleasure - Island

Roxy Music's second album. A vast improvement that will convert those "doubting Thomases" who pointed the accusing finger and called them pretentious, cashing in on the 50's revival. Well, listen a couple of times; there's a new producer, a different bassist, a year gone by, and proof that they're developing an original rock-style. Out of these five eccentrics* star of the show is Brian Ferry — whose voice, even after a tonsillectomy hasn't changed a warble. He also takes credit for the words and music. Especially listen to "Do the Strand" and "In every Dream Home a Heartache".

*see cover for proof.

Procol Harum - Grand Hotel Chrysalis

Having been an ardent admirer of Procol Harum for many moons, I'm delighted yet again. The title track "Grand Hotel" paints musical pictures

of luxury — silver plate and serenades, champagne and chandeliers, grand waltzes around mirrored ballrooms — the massive orchestra and choir make this as unforgettable as "Whiter Shade of Pale". But don't get the impression that this is a one-track album, it is the most consistently satisfying to date. Their versatility is shown to good effect on "A Souvenir of London", a jug-band sound with lyrics about infections in rude places. A well-produced book of words is included, which makes good reading as Keith Reid is a brilliant lyricist. Gary Brooker wrote and sang the melodies (Brooker/Reid are definitely the creative core of the band). Also this is the first LP with new guitarist Mick Grabham, once member of Cochi's, responsible for a solo LP and a fine single. Doubtless music of the calibre of 'Grand Hotel' will still be played in ten years time.

Thanks goes to John Peel without whom none of this would have been possible.

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